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ON THE TRAIL OF THE
WISCONSIN WEREWOLF

ROSWELL REVELATIONS

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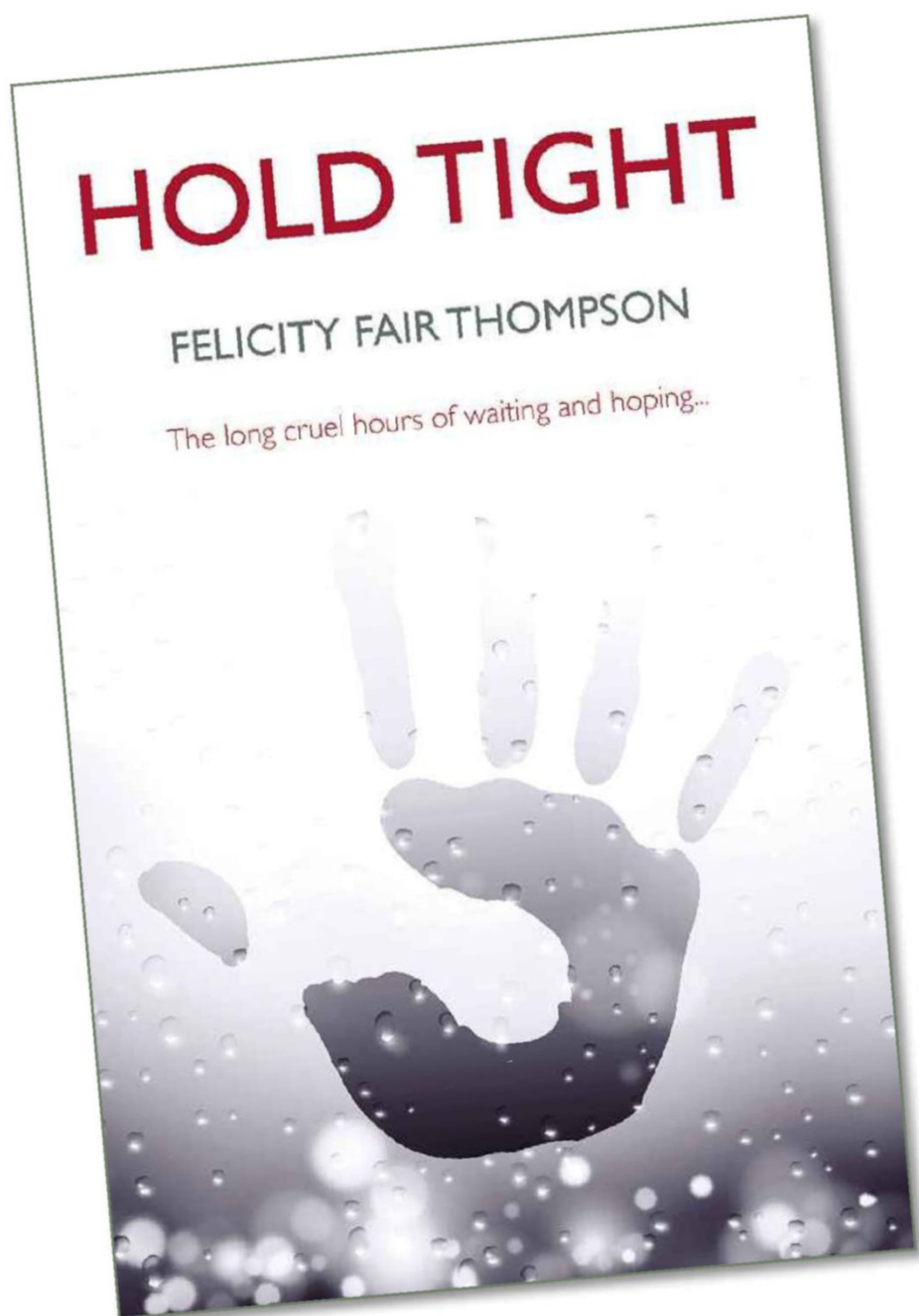
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THE MORBACH MONSTER • THE BEAST OF BRAY ROAD • THE WIZARD OF MAURITIUS • SNAKE STORIES • CROWS BEARING GIFTS • ROSWELL'S EPIC FAIL • ENFIELD ON SCREEN

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editorial

All creatures great and weird

DANCING WITH MANWOLVES

This issue, we present a perfect late-night double bill of creature features: a pair of related articles focusing on a phenomenon not much discussed these days, when Internet-spawned terrors such as Black-Eyed Kids and Slenderman appear to have displaced more traditional monsters. We speak, of course, of werewolves - shaggy, bipedal hybrids of the human and the lupine that were a staple of European lore for centuries before emigrating to the New World and getting a Hollywood makeover. In fact, North America would seem to be their current home, at least on the strength of the many witness reports locating modern manwolves in the rural areas of US states like Michigan and, perhaps most famously, Wisconsin. Tea Krulos has spent much of the last couple of years with monster hunters, and not just your common-or-garden Bigfoot brigade either; here he talks to Linda S Godfrey, who, it could be said, put contemporary wolfmen on the map back in 1991 when, while working on a local Wisconsin newspaper, she first came across sightings of the 'Beast of Bray Road' (see pp38-41). But could this trans-Atlantic journey have also been made in reverse over the same period? Crispin Andrews's account of the 'Morbach Monster', pp30-36) suggests that a rash of supposed sightings of a werewolf in Germany's Hunsrück (better known as the setting for Edgar Reitz's epic *Heimat* than as a hotbed of lycanthropy) was entirely down to the sizeable US military presence in the region during the Cold War era. Whether this were-beast's origin lies in local folklore or bored servicemen spinning yarns, it's a fascinating tale.

MONSTER MUSEUM

Monsters of a different kind are on show in one of the world's most intriguing museums - the International Cryptozoology Museum (ICM) in Portland, Maine, founded by none other than our long-time colleague Loren Coleman. If you can't get to Maine, don't worry: in this month's Fortean Traveller (pp72-74) dedicated winkler-out of weirdness Paul Ross takes us on a tour of this cabinet of cryptozoological curiosities (meanwhile, UK readers can always pop along to Viktor Wynd's Museum of Museum of Curiosities, Fine Art & Natural History in Hackney, London, for a slightly more chaotic collection of oddities; see pp8-9).

If you're planning your fortean getaways for next year, then it's worth noting that Loren and the ICM will be hosting the International Cryptozoological Conference in St Augustine, Florida, in January 2016. The three-day

event will feature a line-up of international speakers on scientific and cryptozoological topics, including the 1896 Giant Octopus of St Augustine and nearby Marineland's links to the coelacanth. Even if you can't make it, the non-profit ICM is looking for assistance with travel/speakers' fees and all donations are appreciated: go to www.gofundme.com/ICM-Africa for details.

COUNTING CROWS

Crows and other corvids (ravens, magpies, rooks, jays and so on) are known to be big-brained birds, exhibiting a high degree of intelligence and problem-solving ability that has earned them the soubriquet of 'feathered apes'. One intriguing bit of behaviour demonstrated by these remarkable birds is the giving of gifts to humans, a number of examples of which are collected on pp22-23. While there have been many accounts of such behaviour, we're struck by the fact that most (as in this selection) seem to reach us from North America. While we've been sent fascinating accounts of corvid behaviour over the years (and your editor recently witnessed a full-blown 'magpie court' in his own garden, involving a group of some 15 birds), we are left wondering whether our native carrion crow is less generous than its New World cousins. Have you been showered with gifts by your local birds and would like to set the record straight? Please share any stories of corvid gift-giving by writing or emailing in and we'll share them in the letters pages.

ERRATUM

FT328:47 In the publishing information for Bess Lovejoy's *Rest in Pieces: The Curious Fates of Famous Corpses*, we neglected to note that while the book is published in the US by Simon and Schuster, in the UK it is published by Duckworth Publishers (ducknet.co.uk) at £14.99 (ISBN 9780715649770).



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 BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
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Why fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about Fortean Times but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 78

Do you REALLY know your movies?

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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

Last trumps and hums

Strange aerial sounds and maddening hums mystify people worldwide

For almost a decade, mysterious aerial sounds – often resembling a trumpet, the whole brass section of an orchestra, electronic screeching, grinding, whirring or booming – have baffled and disturbed witnesses around the world, and have been captured in a number of recordings. The first video posted on YouTube recording the unusual, unearthly sounds came from Homel in Belarus in 2008. That same year another anonymous user shared the “deafening” sounds from a quiet neighbourhood believed to be somewhere in the US. Subsequent recordings come from Colorado, Japan, Iceland and France. Aaron Traylor recorded the sound in Missoula, Montana, on 18 February 2012.

Kimberly Wookey from Terrace, British Columbia, Canada, first captured the sound in June 2013, and since then has managed to make several recordings of the noise, most recently on 7 May this year. Ms Wookey was woken by the sounds at about 7.30am on 29 August 2013, and managed to record them for almost five minutes. She said: “After checking my Facebook I noticed a lot of locals had heard the same sounds again but this time it was far more widespread... The sounds were heard again on Sept 8th at 6:30am. So far we have confirmed reports of it being heard from town to the lake, 25km [15 miles] away... I believe it could be a geophysical phenomenon.”

Another recording of the sound was captured in Kiev, Ukraine, in August 2011. A witness said: “The sound was extremely loud, with some people 30-40km [18-25 miles] from the recording also hearing it in other cities. It was in the news with the



LEFT: Images from a YouTube video seem to show people transfixed by the mysterious screeches and booms.

Research Program (HAARP), or invoke the seven heavenly trumpets from the Book of Revelation.

Some suspect a hoax, and the maker of a previous YouTube video (14 Jan 2012) admitted that she simply recorded a view from her balcony while playing weird sounds on her out-

of-shot laptop. The ‘apocalyptic’ trumpeting noise has also been compared to the sound made by the Tripods in the 2005 *War of the Worlds* film.

The aerial trumpeting should not be confused with the Hum – a mysterious and untraceable sound heard in certain locations around the world by two to 10 per cent of the population, starting with the famous Bristol Hum in the 1970s. This was sometimes blamed on gas pipes, power lines, distant turbines or farm machinery, submarine signals, or even mating fish. The Hum has pushed people to the brink of madness with sleepless nights and a constant ringing in the ears. In April this year, residents in Plymouth, Devon, complained of a “melodic, droning” sound. One resident told the *Plymouth Herald*: “You woke up and thought it was something in the house. You can’t say it’s loud, but it’s a nuisance. We don’t hear it in the daytime, only at night.”

For reports of various

hums, see FT45:17 (Sausalito, California), 65:12-13 (Hueytown, Alabama), 71:12 (Taos, New Mexico), 85:13 (Cornwall), 162:26 (Kokomo, Indiana), 242:17 (Sudbury, Suffolk; Loch Ness; Green Bay, Wisconsin), 278:8 (Woodland, Co. Durham), 291:14 (Co. Kerry, Ireland).

The latest Hum hypothesis – advanced by Fabrice Arduin, Lucia Gualtieri and Eleonore Stutzmann in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters* – is that ocean currents cause the Earth to vibrate subtly as they shift across its surface, creating ‘microseismic’ activity that elicits a ‘ring’. The continuous waves produce sounds lasting from 13 to 300 seconds. Arduin said: “I think our result is an important step in the transformation of mysterious noise into an understood signal” – though why such a sound should be confined to a mere handful of locations and heard by only a tiny minority of the population remains a puzzle.

According to NASA, the Earth has ‘natural radio emissions’. The Agency said: “If humans had radio antennas instead of ears, we would hear a remarkable symphony of strange noises coming from our own planet. Scientists call them ‘tweaks’, ‘whistlers’ and ‘sferics’. They sound like background music from a flamboyant science fiction film, but this is not science fiction. Earth’s natural radio emissions are real and, although we’re mostly unaware of them, they are around us all the time.” *Sunday Express, MX News (Sydney)*, 17 April; *National Post (Canada)*, 13 May; *dailymail.co.uk*, 17 May 2015.

To hear some aerial noises, go to: www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel_news/article-3084260/What-strange-sound-sky-Noise-heard-globe-nearly-DECADE-explanation.html.

For a sceptical take, go to www.snopes.com/photos/supernatural/strangesounds.asp.

The sounds often resemble a trumpet or brass section

investigation with specialists and scientists, but there is still no exact explanation.”

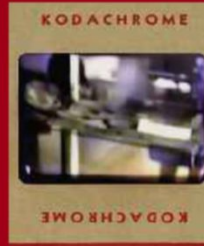
A video from Germany taken from a window pans onto a street and shows a child frozen still as the chilling sounds echo over the landscape. And in Salzburg in Austria the noise is magnified across the Eastern Alps. In Allen, Texas, the mysterious noise had a group of people stop what they were doing in a car park and look towards the sky, with one exclaiming: “It’s weird, I’ve never heard anything like that.” Inadequate explanations include the grinding of tectonic plates, trains shunting or building works. Others blame the High Frequency Active Auroral



SLEEPY HOLLOW
Kazakhstan's mysterious sleeping sickness gets weirder...
PAGE 10



SERPENTINE STORIES
Virgin births, cobra weddings and stowaway snakes galore
PAGE 24



ROSWELL PHOTO FAIL
The Roswell slides 'smoking gun' proves a damp squib
PAGE 26

The Conspirasphere

Conspiracy websites are home to a breathtaking range of nutty theories – or are those actually monological beliefs? **NOEL ROONEY** investigates...

The term 'monological' is regularly offered by academics in descriptions of conspiracy theorists' beliefs. It's a wonderfully loose word, which gives the user a broad peg to hang observations on; essentially, it allows the observer to characterise the behaviour and beliefs of conspiracy theorists as a species of mental imbalance. It was first used in this way by Theodore Adorno and co in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), an attempt to render anti-fascist ideology into academic dispassion, or to put it another way, an academic gambit designed to label some kinds of dissidence as deviance, both moral and political.

Not that the conspiracy world is short of nutters. As a community, the Conspirasphere is very accepting; it tolerates a surprisingly broad range of beliefs and theories, and a good many of these theories are clearly – to the sceptical or rational mind, at least – somewhere between silly and outright insane. For less prejudiced observers, that is of course part of the joy of the Conspirasphere; where else (other than Parliament and FIFA perhaps) can you find so many delightful eccentrics offering crazed rationales for events that can often have only crazed rationales? Doesn't this make the Conspirasphere a tolerant, liberal sort of club, rather than a narrow sect of right-wing religious fanatics?

So, monological then: a world view that is based on a single grand narrative that purports to explain diverse events under a single, comprehensive theoretical framework – like religion (I would include missionary atheism here) or classical Marxism; conspiracists are in august company, although their detractors tend to a blindness in this respect that some might consider monological.

One of the defining characteristics of a monological world view is the ability to

believe mutually contradictory things, or to believe in a whole panoply of curiosities linked only by the vague assurances of the overarching narrative (for the stereotypical conspiracist, should such a person exist, the idea that 'They' are behind it all, perhaps, or the serene omnipotence of those 12 bearded men under a hill). Again, one could lump all sorts of belief systems into a bucket this wide, but see the link below to an article on Alex Jones for the conspiracy version.

So perhaps the entire academic effort is akin to a witch hunt, or a species of social control aimed at comforting the conformists while ostracising the deviant thinkers (this point of view was recently put forward in an article in *Foreign Policy Journal*). In which case, it's no more rational than the 'lizards from Nibiru' school of history, and offers a prime example of mimetic antagonism at work; maybe it's properly a conspiracy. In any case, it's far less fun than the object of its opprobrium.

So thank the deity (or lack of) of your choice for little gems like those offered by Scott C Waring, who runs UFO Sightings Daily (think squirrels on Mars): his comment on a video posting showing an alien hidden in the details of the Mona Lisa is properly monological and priceless to boot. "The likelihood of Leonardo da Vinci being an alien or half-breed is very high," he suggests, because da Vinci was good at quite a lot of things. There you have it.

www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2015/05/05/conspiracy-theory-as-a-personality-disorder/
<http://conspiracypsychology.com/2013/01/17/alex-jones-and-the-monological-belief-system/>
<http://metro.co.uk/2015/05/09/is-the-mona-lisa-proof-that-aliens-exist-5188908/>
www.ufosightingsdaily.com/



EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Woman trifle drunk in jelly-wrestling incident

Brighton Argus, 18 Aug 2014.

US giant buys Boots

D.Mail, 7 Aug 2014

LION CUB GETS HEAD STUCK IN DEAD BUFFALO'S BUM

Sun, via Irish Independent, 19 July 2014.

Women targeted by vomit fetishist

Metro, 19 Aug 2014.

'Underwear-stealing ghosts made my life hell': Hull woman forced to move seven times

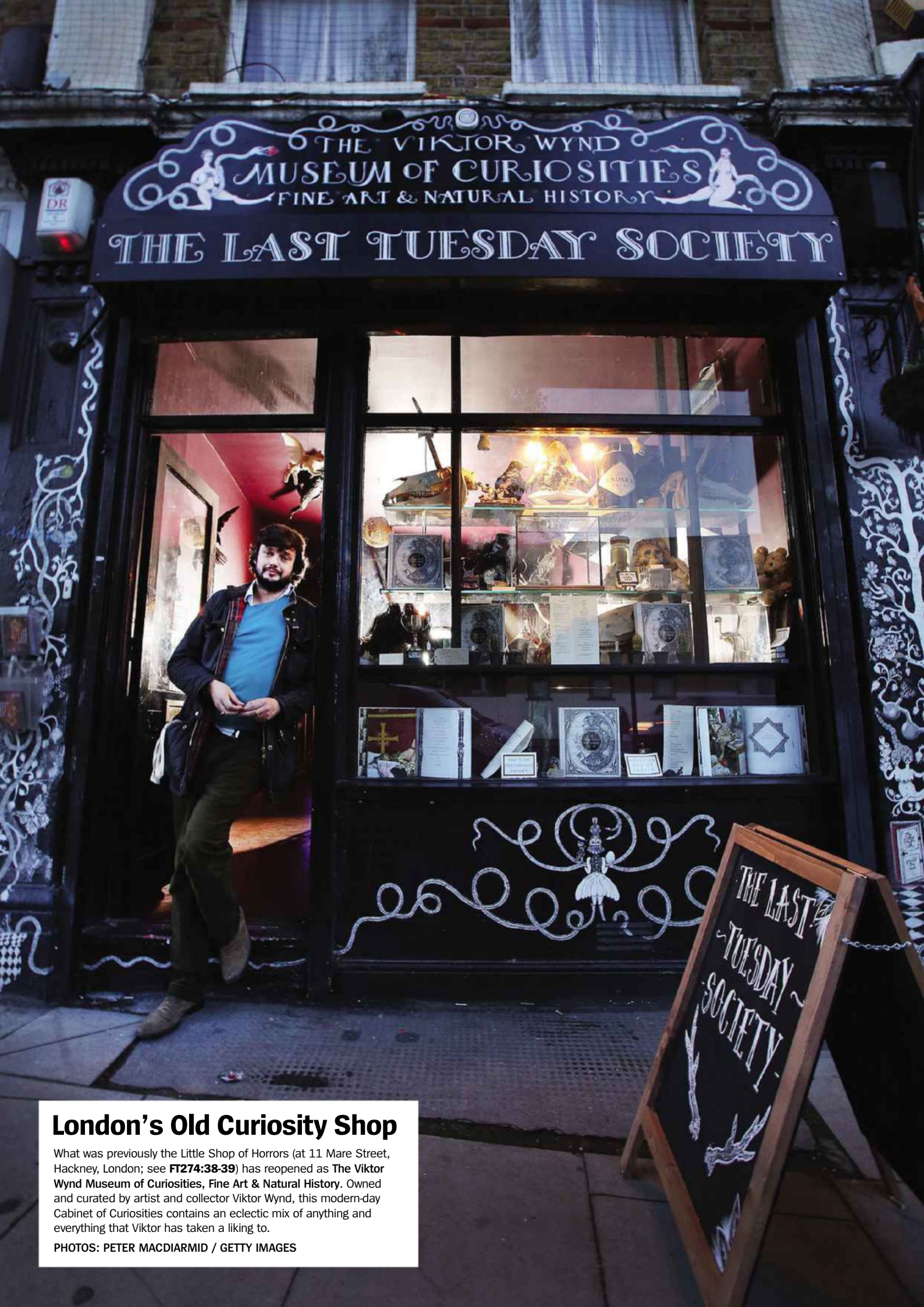
Hull Daily Mail, 8 Aug 2014.

Fines handed out to Sussex parents for children missing school rockets

Brighton Argus, 10 Aug 2014.

Spider From Mars returns to home city

Hull Daily Mail, 15 Aug 2014.



THE VIKTOR WYND
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THE LAST TUESDAY SOCIETY

London's Old Curiosity Shop

What was previously the Little Shop of Horrors (at 11 Mare Street, Hackney, London; see **FT274:38-39**) has reopened as **The Viktor Wynd Museum of Curiosities, Fine Art & Natural History**. Owned and curated by artist and collector Viktor Wynd, this modern-day Cabinet of Curiosities contains an eclectic mix of anything and everything that Viktor has taken a liking to.

PHOTOS: PETER MACDIARMID / GETTY IMAGES



SIDELINES...

WOULD-BE HERO

A drunken Frenchman was found on 29 March trying to resuscitate a rubber dinghy he believed was a person about to die. The 22-year-old had called emergency services in the early hours and told them to rush an ambulance to a shipyard in Vannes, Brittany. He was discovered on his knees underneath a boat giving the dinghy mouth-to-mouth and heart massage. He was put in a cell to sober up. *D.Telegraph, 30 Mar 2015.*

MADONNA OF THE ROCK

Hundreds of visitors have been drawn to the Italian village of Casaletto Spartano (pop 1,400) to see a figure on a rock face said to resemble the Virgin Mary. The figure began to emerge last summer when a chunk of rock broke off the cliff during a minor landslide. Villagers didn't notice it at first, but now many discern hands and a cloak hanging down. The rock lies just below a path used during religious processions. *BBC News, 14 April 2015.*

HOLY COCK

A cock that flew up a tree and stayed there for 10 days while a mysterious disease killed every chicken in its village was being worshipped by pilgrims. The bird, which lives in a temple in Ptanvadi, Madhya Pradesh, India, was being visited by thousands of people who hoped it would grant their wishes in return for food. It flew down from the tree each morning to greet the faithful. *Metro, 9 April 2015.*

FIFTEEN PLUS SIX

Lovely Singh walked out of her wedding ceremony in Rasoolabad village, northern Uttar Pradesh state, India, on 11 March after the groom-to-be failed to solve a simple maths problem: What is 15 plus six? Ram Baran's answer was 17. "The groom's family kept us in the dark about his poor education," said Mohar Singh, the bride's father. Both families returned all the wedding gifts and jewellery. *[AP] 13 Mar; D.Mail, 14 Mar 2015.*

MEDICAL BAG

The holidaymakers who developed permanent travel sickness, plus people who smell like rotting fish...

CLIMB ON THE WAGON, MADAM!

• A woman who went on holiday to Turkey in 2005 has been feeling airsick almost ever since. After leaving the plane in Marmaris with her two teenage daughters, Catharine Bell found herself struggling to balance, nauseous and feeling permanently dizzy. Her symptoms worsened during the two-week holiday, to the point where she could not walk down the hotel corridor without holding onto the wall. "As soon as we landed I felt seriously odd," said Mrs Bell, 46, from Bellingham, Northumberland. "The whole world had transformed into bouncy castle land and I felt as if I were walking on a giant marshmallow. My world was moving up and down and from side to side. I felt sick, had a headache and felt decidedly unwell. I presumed I had an ear infection and thought I would see the doctor when I got home. As our plane took off all my symptoms disappeared and I thought, 'Hooray, I'm better' – but as soon as we touched down the symptoms were back."

For months Mrs Bell suffered nausea and the sensation that everything was moving around her, but doctors could find nothing wrong. Travel sickness pills and ear syringing made no difference. "And then one day I woke up and it was gone," she said. "I was so relieved. I really thought it was an imbalance in my ear." But when she went to Turkey with her daughters again the following year, her symptoms returned with a vengeance. She was unable to sleep, read or walk in a straight line. At one point she couldn't stand up and was left clinging to the carpet as her world spun around. She took to the Internet and came across mal de débarquement syndrome (MdDS), a neurological disorder triggered by travel, which can last for months or even years. She went to her doctor who confirmed the diagnosis – but there is no cure. By 2013 she had had the symptoms continuously for four



ABOVE: MdDS sufferer Catharine Bell: "I live in a wibbly wobbly world".

NEIL DENHAM / CATERS NEWS

"As soon as we touched down, the symptoms were back"

years, but continued to work as a school caretaker and play leader, as well as going on holiday every year. "I live in a wibbly wobbly world and take precautions to avoid my symptoms worsening," she said. "I don't drink, I eat well and I exercise a lot. I lead a very full, happy, if slightly topsy-turvy life." *D.Mail, Metro, 2 May 2013.*

• To celebrate her 62nd birthday in 2012, Diane Morley went on a week-long cruise to Norway, and on the second day the ship was caught in a bad storm. It was so rough that she and her husband Dennis felt as if they were in a washing machine. Returning to terra firma, Mrs Morley found she had mal de débarquement syndrome. Three years later, the retired auxiliary nurse from Herne Bay in Kent takes pills for the condition, but feels as if she is "still in the ocean waiting to be rescued. It just doesn't come and go, it's always there. It's awful." She has even contemplated suicide. *Sun,*

Metro, 19 May 2015.

• A study of 27 MdDS cases, conducted by Timothy C Hain in 1999, noted all but one patient to be female, average age 49 years. This apparent gender disparity might be because the questionnaire that formed the basis of the study was circulated in a publication with a predominantly female reader base. *Archives of Otolaryngology 125(6): 615-20.*

• In August 2013, Bobbie Lane was enjoying her first trip to the Reading Festival in Berkshire when her friends decided to take a spin on the Superbowl, a fairground ride that flips and spins punters at high speeds. "A couple of minutes after I got off the ride, I was still a bit dizzy, which I thought was strange," said the 26-year-old from Ash in Kent. "After I returned home, the dizziness stayed with me and it felt like I was permanently at sea." She was diagnosed not with MdDS but with migraine variant balance disorder and put on a course of medication, strict diet and physiotherapy. Even though she feels as if she is permanently sozzled, the former charity worker has been forbidden to drink alcohol. "I've had to quit the job I loved because I have to avoid all stress," she said. *Metro, 7 Aug 2014.*



UGH, WHAT'S THAT STINK?

• Since 2000, Ellie James, 45, a company director from Abingdon in Oxfordshire, has been blighted by a very rare and embarrassing genetic disorder that leaves her reeking of rotting fish. The disorder, known as trimethylaminuria (TMAU) or fish-odour syndrome, has had a devastating impact on her life since it developed when she was 30. Dubbed “smelly Ellie”, she has been taunted and ridiculed by strangers and has had bottles of body spray posted anonymously thorough her letterbox. “At first the smell was a complete mystery,” she said. “I’d always had impeccable hygiene. I wondered if my cat had brought in a mouse and left it to rot. But I slowly realised it was me when strangers began to stare at me while holding their noses. I heard people whispering about me in the office. I would come home from work every night and cry. Soon people were showering me with gifts of perfume. At Christmas I’d get soap – it was completely humiliating. It was a real struggle getting out of bed in the morning.” At one point Ms James was having a bath five times a day, and in desperation she resorted to scrubbing her skin with kitchen detergent until it was red raw.

The condition is caused by the absence of a certain enzyme, resulting in a strong odour in sweat, urine and breath, usually compared to rotting fish, rotten eggs, faeces or rubbish. It is created when the body is unable to break down trimethylamine in the liver. This smelly chemical is produced in the gut when certain foods containing the B vitamin choline – such as dairy products, coffee, meat and fish – are digested.

After suffering with the condition for five years, Ms James

visited her GP in 2005, but was left feeling humiliated after being lectured on personal hygiene. A year later, she was taken seriously and in 2007 finally diagnosed. An endocrinologist put her on antibiotics and a diet plan. She said: “I began to wash with a

She performs gigs, despite reeking of rotting fish



ABOVE: The fishy smell is the result of a rare genetic disorder.

pH-balanced soap after I found out that washing excessively with normal soap made the smell even worse. There is no cure, but making these changes helps.” Her partner, Dan Molston, 50, said: “Ellie is a lovely person and that’s all that matters.” *D.Mail*, 7 April 2014.

• TMAU was first detected in the 1970s; in 2003 the Trimethylaminuria Foundation, a support group based in New York City, estimated there were about 300 documented cases around the

world. In that year, a four-year-old girl in Pamplona was diagnosed with TMAU, the first recorded case in Spain. In 2008, a 41-year-old woman in Perth, Australia, who had been plagued by rotting-fish odour since she was seven, was finally diagnosed with TMAU. Prof John Burnett of the University of Western Australia said the woman had “experienced ridicule, distress and shame during her school years.” She saw six doctors over the next 20 years – but they all believed she was a hypochondriac. *British Medical Journal*, 28 Aug 1999; [AP] 13 Mar 2003; *Medical Journal of Australia*, Oct 2008; *Sun*, 21 Oct 2008.

• Another trimethylaminuria sufferer is Claire Rhodes, 34, from York. It got so bad that she quit her care job in a residential home and contemplated suicide. She even had teeth taken out in a bid to cure her bad breath and brushed so often her gums receded. After enduring the stench since her early 20s, she was diagnosed in 2010. Since then, a strict diet of berries, pears, carrots, turnips, potatoes and salad keep the fishy odour at bay. Her weight has also plummeted from 231.5lb (105kg) to 140lb (63.5kg). *Sun, MX News (Sydney)*, 17 April 2012.

• Then there’s Cassie Graves, 23, a singer-songwriter from south London, who performs live gigs, despite reeking of rotting fish. She is unable to smell her own odour and relies on friends and family to tell her when she pongs. “That’s the most frustrating thing about the disorder,” she said. “It makes you paranoid.” Like Mrs Rhodes, she avoids meat and fish – but also dark green leafy vegetables. *Metro*, 3 July 2014.

For the case of a man smelling of rotten food caused by clostridia (a spore form of bacteria found in soil and the intestinal tract), see FT95:20, 99:12.

SIDELINES...

BROTHER, BE GONE!

Donna Ayres, 33, says she is being terrorised by the ghost of her brother Paul, who died in 2009. It has pinned her to a bed, bruised her and played guitar. She has moved home five times to evade the spirit, to no avail. She has filmed a levitating spoon and a Ouija board flying across a room at her Blackpool home. *Metro*, 17 Mar 2015.

SIGHT UNSEEN

A Muslim groom was beaten senseless with an ashtray in Saudi Arabia after asking his prospective in-laws if he could see the bride’s face before their marriage. His wife-to-be had turned up to a pre-wedding meeting in a Riyadh hotel wearing a full burka. (Last year, a Saudi groom divorced his bride on their wedding day when he saw her for the first time.) *Metro*, 4 Mar 2015.

COMFORT JOEY

Police officer Rich Dahl responded to an anonymous complaint from a customer about a woman who entered a McDonald’s restaurant in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, carrying a baby kangaroo wrapped in a blanket and tucked in an infant car seat. Confronted, she explained it was “a service animal” to help her cope with emotional distress and she produced a letter from a doctor. She agreed to leave the restaurant. [AP] 3 Feb 2015.

ALL LOOKING AT YOU

More than 2,000 human eyeballs given for cornea transplants were found in a dustbin in Delhi, India. *Sun*, 28 Mar 2015.



MARTIN ROSS



SIDELINES...

MAMMALIAN TOURISTS

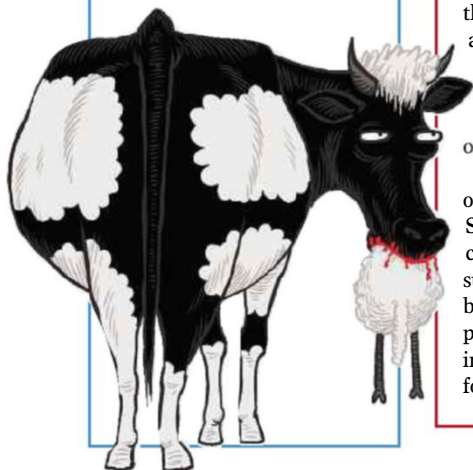
Anna Shearer from Marlow in Buckinghamshire filmed a mysterious creature up a tree in her back garden. The RSPCA identified it as a coati from the rainforests of subtropical South America. In 2004, a handful of coatis were spotted in woods around the Lake District in Cumbria. In 2010, there were thought to be about 10 coatis living wild in the UK, their provenance unknown. *independent.co.uk*, 9 Feb 2015.

PRESIDENT FROM SPACE

Shaun Watson, 25, of Wolverhampton, punched his mother in the face, bit her nose and choked her when she laughed at his theory that Barack Obama is an alien. "He loves his mum," said the defending counsel at his trial in Telford, Shropshire. "This was something fuelled by drink." *Sun*, 10 Feb 2015.

MOOVABLE FEAST

Charles Mamboleo, who farms in Nakuru County, Kenya, told the *Daily Nation* newspaper that a cow had eaten one of his sheep after goring it to death, and the next day he discovered a second dead sheep. "After the first incident, we thought the cow was starving, so we increased the supply of fodder and water, but it continued chasing after sheep," said Mr Mamboleo. An agricultural officer said the cow might have been trying to get more nutrients after a recent drought. *D.Telegraph*, 25 April 2015.



'SLEEPY HOLLOW'

MYSTERIOUS SLEEPING SICKNESS CONTINUES TO AFFLICT RESIDENTS OF KAZAKH VILLAGE



VERA SALITSKAYA / SIBERIAN TIMES

The unidentified sleep epidemic in Kalachi, Kazakhstan's "village of the damned" [FT316:8, 327:22], appears ever more bizarre as further details emerge. Previous reports stated that the illness first appeared in March 2013, though now we are told that the trouble started "four years ago" (that is, 2011). Similarly, besides Kalachi, the epidemic was said to have also affected the 130 remaining residents of the nearby ghost town of Krasnogorsk with its Soviet-era uranium mine, long decommissioned; but now we are told that "hardly any" of them have succumbed – only those who visited Kalachi, where it has affected about a quarter of the population (about 160 people). This seems to demolish the most commonly proposed explanation: radioactive radon gas seeping from the old mine four miles (6.4km) away. Besides, there are many other decommissioned uranium mines, many with much higher radon levels, but no other outbreak of the sleeping malady.

Sergei Lukashenko, director of the Kazakhstan's Radiation Safety and Ecology Institute, is certain radon is not to blame, but suspects carbon monoxide might be playing a role, though why some people are affected but not others in the same house is a problem for any simple environmental

He leapt out of bed and gave a Nazi salute to his doctors



explanation. "The question is why [the illness] does not go away," said Lukashenko. "We have some suspicions as the village has a peculiar location, a hollow, and weather patterns frequently force chimney smoke to go down instead of up... That could be a factor." The village has even been dubbed 'Sleepy Hollow'.

By the end of last year over 20,000 laboratory and clinical tests had been conducted – on the air, soil, water, food, animals, building materials, and on the residents themselves. The tests are ongoing. Some claim toxic waste has been buried in the area. Baffled doctors have diagnosed the victims with encephalopathy, a brain disorder.

ABOVE: Many people have now fled the small village of Kalachi.

Scans have shown that many of the sufferers have excessive accumulation of fluid on the brain – known as oedema. Some have dismissed the Kalachi malady as narcolepsy or even chronic fatigue syndrome, but none of these hypotheses account for the totality of observed phenomena. Locals say there are several common factors to the attacks. They tend to come in waves, they seem to be more common during a thaw than when the ground is frozen, and, say some, there is a correlation with wind direction.

"During hospitalisation, people exposed to the disease were marked by identical complaints: dizziness, weakness, loss of coordination, unconsciousness or semiconscious state for up to three days," said Professor Leonid Rikhvanov from Tomsk Polytechnic University. "After passing the first symptoms, they get headaches, become confused, and suffer emotional instability and memory disorders, which can last up to several weeks."

Last January, one woman said that even her cat had come down with the disease, falling into a deep sleep following a bizarre outburst of hyperactivity in the early hours of the morning that



saw it attack the dog and bite his owner.

Kalachi women said that when their menfolk came round from their deep slumber – lasting from 12 hours to six days – they often awoke craving sex, and this arousal could persist for a month or more. Some ranted uncontrollably; one man, known for his impeccable manners, cursed nurses as ‘whores’ and ‘prostitutes’; another, apparently recovering, suddenly leapt out of bed, gave a Nazi salute to his doctors, greeting them with ‘Heil Hitler’, while a 60-year-old grandfather imagined he was a cock, flapping his arms around and crowing.

Elena Zhavoronkova and Lyudmila Samusenkyo – both described as “serious-minded” – found themselves in hospital at the same time recovering from the sleeping condition, and experienced some of the strange side effects. “I felt that something was wrong, but still I had an urge to escape, and I asked Lyudmila to join me on a lift ride,” said Elena. They shut themselves in the elevator, playing a bizarre game of tag with doctors. “We were laughing and giggling and felt like we were schoolgirls. One of the surgeons prized open the doors with a chisel, and we both jumped on him and started hitting him in the face. It felt like great fun.”

Others feel they have been turned into zombies. Many have an urge to walk when they wake up. One man dressed himself in only a hospital nappy and repeatedly fled his hospital ward. One day last September, eight schoolchildren

drifted off in class in the space of an hour. Many child victims have been overpowered by delirium, telling of seeing monsters. Misha Plyukhin, 13, saw light bulbs and horses flying around him, and his mother with eight eyes and an elephant’s trunk; then he recalled snakes and worms in his bed, eating his arms. While some reports assert there are no health consequences after those affected wake up, Lyubov Rabchevskaya said her 10-year-old son Alkmaz “was full of energy before, but now he’s not nearly as active as he was. He needs rest... We began to think that someone is deliberately poisoning us to force us away. Some say that over the hill nearby gold was found and even the road is built. There was a meeting at the beginning of February to discuss relocation. The people who screamed loudest that they would not be going anywhere all fell asleep. The locals joked that they each were individually poisoned.”

Sometimes the symptoms resemble the impact of alcohol poisoning, but locals also claim that the side effects are now subtly different from when the first cases appeared. “The last epidemic was at the beginning of March, when 15 people were near falling asleep, but unlike earlier, they were not actually deeply asleep, or out for a long time,” said one source. “They all managed to get themselves to the local hospital. They felt exhausted and weak, but none of them needed to be taken to hospital in Esil, the nearest town. Earlier on, during another episode, all sleepers were aggressive and everyone –

from men to children – had to be tied to their beds because they were trying to attack doctors, nurses and other patients. There were moments when people were all vomiting, or hiccupping. This makes some people think that there is a kind of a drug-testing going on, each time a different one. Others say an old Soviet chemical or radioactive weapon was dumped here, and this is poisoning us.”

The state is currently running an evacuation plan, with the government paying £890 to help meet the costs of relocation. Some 52 families have already left the village, with 10 more scheduled to leave. Others were waiting for the end of the school year. At the end of April some 381 people still remained.

“The radioactive background is normal, all products people are eating have been checked, the water is tested, nothing is harmful there,” said Kabdrashit Almagambetov, the district’s top doctor. “The strange effect is noticed only in this one village. I can assure you that it is not some mental disorder, it is not some hysterical epidemic, as was supposed previously.” He also dismissed the notion of intentional poisoning, as did scientists from the National Nuclear Researching centre of Kazakhstan, who have been taking samples of soil, water and gas around the village since April 2014. However, suspicious locals point out that none of these scientists has been struck down by the slumbering disease.

Vitaly, 61, a TV repairman who declined to give his surname, used to work in the uranium mine. “It looks like some kind of beam went through the village,” he said. “Maybe from some special equipment, like an emitter. It’s all just speculation. I just see that the location of the homes, where people fell asleep, are in straight lines, as if some beam cut through them. I’m not speaking about UFOs. I am simply trying to understand what is going on here.” Lyubov Bilkova, who has suffered eight attacks of the malady, said: “Everyone is afraid. Everyone is afraid of sleeping.” *theguardian.com*, 18 Mar; *telegraph.co.uk*, 26 Mar; *dailymail.co.uk*, 30 April 2015.

SIDELINES...

UP ON TICKLE CREEK

Michael Dick, 53, was accused of masturbating in public after police found him wandering naked in broad daylight near Tickle Creek, Oregon. Last September, Calvin E Wank of Deposit, New York State, was busted for the same offence [FT321:9]. *MX News (Sydney)*, 31 Mar 2015.

BABBLER REPLIES

A sparrow-sized brown bird, long thought to be extinct, has been rediscovered in Burma’s grasslands, but its fragmented habitat is threatened by human encroachment. The Jerdon’s Babbler was discovered in the 1860s but has not been reported in 74 years. Scientists found the bird after playing a recording of its song and getting an answer. [AP] 17 Mar 2015.

SAVING MAX ZAPPY

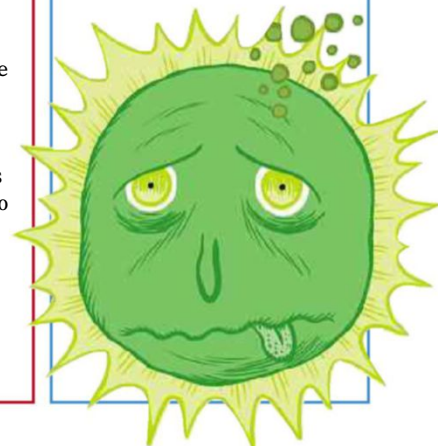
Niklas Frankfurter, 39, called police to say, “Max Zappy wants to kill himself”. Police in Leipzig rushed to the scene to find a drunken Frankfurter holding a stuffed teddy bear and claiming he was stopping it from jumping from a window. Man and bear were arrested. *Sun*, 26 Mar; *Metro*, 31 Mar 2015.

LONE GREEN STAR

Of all the stars in the whole sky visible to the naked eye, only one is green and nobody knows why. This is *Beta Librae*, the second brightest star in Libra the Scales, just south of Serpens. *The Night Sky* by Adrian Berry, (*D.Telegraph*), 4 May 2015).



ABOVE: One of the numerous victims of the mysterious sleeping epidemic.



SIDELINES...

NEW LAND

A mile-wide volcanic island, 820ft (250m) high, appeared off the coast of Tonga during February 2015, and by 7 March was deemed cool enough to walk on. Three Tongans landed on a black beach and climbed to the ring of the crater, which contained a green lake smelling strongly of sulphur. There were thousands of all kinds of seabird, laying eggs. The island will erode back into the sea, but should remain long enough to attract tourists. *D.Telegraph, 12 Mar 2015.*

TOO MUCH OF NOTHING

Astronomers have discovered a 'supervoid' 1.8 billion light years across that should be filled by 10,000 galaxies. It sits in a region of space much colder than other parts of the Universe. Though not a vacuum, it seems to have 20 per cent less matter than other regions and does not fit with predicted models. It is "simply too big to exist". *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, April 2015.*

VERY OLD WATER

By examining the ratio of hydrogen to deuterium (a heavy isotope of hydrogen) in water molecules, researchers have found that "a significant fraction" of the water on Earth – up to half – was inherited from interstellar space, and probably predates the Solar System, raising the likelihood that life exists elsewhere in our galaxy. *[AFP] 26 Sept 2014.*

DELIVERED BY RAIL

A newborn baby boy survived unscathed, falling through the lavatory of a moving train in India after his mother gave birth in a carriage. A warehouse guard in Dabli Rathan, Rajasthan, heard the 2kg (4lb 4oz) boy's cries and alerted railway officials. The baby was reunited with his mother, 22, who had blacked out after bleeding heavily during the birth. *D.Mirror, D.Telegraph, 8 Feb 2015.*

Screams on Ben Nevis

"Bloodcurdling" cries lead to alarm and fruitless search



NEIL SCOTT

ABOVE: Comb Gully, Ben Nevis, where climber Christopher Sleight and his friend heard the "bloodcurdling scream".

When Christopher Sleight heard bloodcurdling screaming on Ben Nevis on 19 February, he feared the worst. Recent weeks had seen some of the best ice climbing conditions in years in the west of Scotland, especially on Ben Nevis. Sleight had set out with a good friend to climb an ice route called Comb Gully, high in the corrie bounded by the Trident Buttress on one side and the steep walls of Tower Ridge on the other. He was on the crux pitch – about 10m (33ft) or so of very steep ground – when he heard the first scream.

"It started indistinctly, slightly muffled, but quickly came sharp into focus," he wrote. "It pierced through the mist – the most visceral, awful sound. People talk about bloodcurdling

"It pierced the mist – the most visceral, awful sound"

screaming and for the first time I understood. That noise sent a stream of cold blood around my veins and chilled the back of my neck." He assumed it was a climber who had seen someone fall to their death, and discussed with his friend where the screams might have come from.

They completed the climb as quickly as they could, ending up on the Ben Nevis plateau in the mist. "Surely we should

be hearing the beginnings of a rescue – confident voices coming out of the fog. But there was nothing – just the clinking of our climbing gear being tidied into sacks." They descended to Fort William and spoke to another climber Sleight knew who had been on a route in the same corrie. He had abseiled off his route and gone to investigate, but found nothing. Other climbers did the same. Nobody could find evidence of an accident and the police said no one had been reported missing. Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team was asked to investigate the reports of screaming, but later stood down after no trace of a casualty could be found. *BBC News, 21 Feb 2015.*



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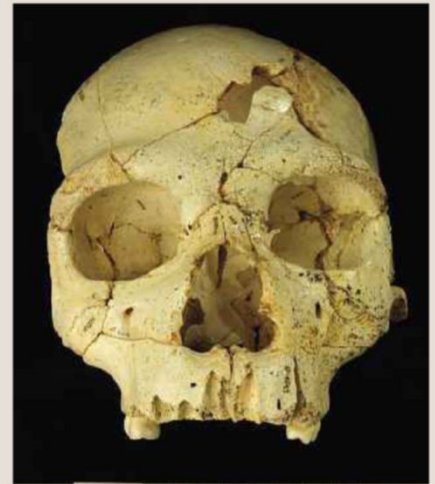


ARCHAEOLOGY

Our archaeological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, Managing Editor of *Time & Mind – The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.tandfonline.com/rtam)



YOHANNES HAILE-SELASSIE



ABOVE LEFT: One of the jaw bones of *Australopithecus deyiremeda* discovered in Ethiopia. **ABOVE RIGHT:** ‘Cranium 17’: evidence of early human-on-human violence. **BELOW:** An early Christian-era runestone at Uppsala, Sweden. **FACING PAGE:** The Calderstones bird engraving discovered by schoolboy Connor Hannaway.

THEY WALKED THE EARTH

It appears that evidence of a new species of early human has been unearthed in the Afar region of Ethiopia. Researchers discovered jaw bones and teeth of probably four individuals, dating to between 3.3m and 3.5m years old – indicating that these early humans walked the Earth at the same time as several other early human species (‘hominins’), including the famous ‘Lucy’ (*Australopithecus afarensis*). The newly discovered species has been dubbed *Australopithecus deyiremeda*, meaning “close relative” in the Afar language. It seems that the human genus was kind of crowded back then. “The hypothesis of linear evolution has to be revisited,” says lead researcher, Dr Yohannes Haile-Selassie, curator of physical anthropology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in America. One hopes they don’t end up finding the fossilised skull of a creature with a huge, bulbous cranium, diminutive chin, and oversized eye sockets! *BBC News*, 28 May 2015. (Original paper in *Nature* vol. 521.)

IN YOUR FACE

While we are in the Old Bones department, here is another, if somewhat depressing, new discovery. Using modern imaging techniques, palaeontological researchers have been studying a skull identified as “Cranium 17” from Sima de los Huesos, (“Pit of the Bones”), a cave in northern Spain. The extremely ancient remains of over two dozen individuals have been uncovered here,

PAUL DEVEREUX

and have been keeping researchers busy for years. Extracted DNA shows the remains to be over 400,000 years old. Cranium 17 displays the marks of a lethal attack, having two fractures caused by “multiple blows” of almost certainly the same object. As researchers unhappily point out, this study indicates that violence is an intrinsic part of the earliest human culture. With our own knowledge of humanity, that unfortunately seems about right. *PLOS One*, 27 May; *BBC News*, 28 May 2015.



SECRET RUNES

We usually associate runes with the Viking era, and runic script was the dominant written language across Scandinavia until incoming Christianity in the ninth and 10th centuries introduced the Latin alphabet which, by the Middle Ages, had virtually supplanted the use of runes – but not quite. In an astonishing discovery by Swedish linguist Henrik Rosenkvist, it is now known that writing in runes survived into the 20th century in a remote area of western Sweden called Älvdalen, in Dalarna County. There, Rosenkvist recently saw a letter dated 1906 written partly in runes. The reason for such late runic survival seems to be due to the fact that Älvdalen is geographically isolated by mountains, forests and lakes, and up until modern times the inhabitants remained pretty much cut off from contact with the rest of the country. Another reason is that school attendance wasn’t compulsory in Sweden until the mid-19th century. Many children didn’t attend school until then, and people simply kept on using the runes as their written language.

The runes in Älvdalen were most commonly found on houses and inscribed in furniture. They were also carved into “message blades”, wooden sticks that were circulated among the farms in the area; but Rosenkvist’s discovery of the letter shows they were also used in writing. The Älvdalen runes are the latest form of the script known to researchers.

CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

Runes aren't the only surviving ancient treasure to be found in Ålvdalen – some hundreds of people there still speak in an archaic Norse tongue, which provides experts in Scandinavian linguistics with a veritable treasure trove of information. The ancient language is called Elfdalian – no kidding. *Science Nordic*, 21 May 2015.

LOST AND FOUND DEPARTMENT

We periodically have to visit this department, and we have two cases this time. The first involves the Calderstones, probably remnants of a Neolithic burial chamber, now displayed in the Harthill Greenhouse in Calderstones Park, Allerton, Liverpool. Though displaced from their original location, they still held a secret, as 13-year-old Connor Hannaway found out. He was in a school party visiting the stones when he dropped his pencil while making some notes. As he picked it up, he noticed what seemed to be the outline of a bird engraved near the base of one of the standing stones. He mentioned it to the party's guide but his observation was initially dismissed. The lad persisted, however, and it was eventually confirmed that a previously unreported marking on the stones had indeed been discovered by sharp-eyed Connor. Although the stones themselves have Neolithic carvings on them, it is thought that the bird engraving was not added until AD 400 or even several centuries later. It is clearly not Neolithic and is actually quite defined, so it is astonishing that archaeologists and others had never noticed it before. *Liverpool Echo*, 17 April 2015.

Another extraordinary case of lost and found is the discovery of a stone circle on Dartmoor, south-west England – the first such discovery on the moor for over a century. The circle is the highest in southern England at 1,722ft (525m) above sea level and is also the second largest on the moor, with a diameter of 112ft (34m). It consists of 30 stones (now recumbent), plus one more lying in a gap just outside the circle and now incorporated into an old wall. The stones had fallen around 4,000 years ago, according to carbon dating of the soil beneath them. *Guardian*, 11 May 2015.



189: MAYBE, BABY

“A good many brats are brought up in the straight and narrow, somewhat deviously” – Fort, Books, p850.

Not sure Kate and Wills are best advised in their onomastic choices. George derives from a Greek word for ‘peasant’. Its kraut pedigree will not sit well with all, remembering the first two royal Georges with their shaky English and brutish ways, George III whose madness is remembered by all, and George IV of whom it was said that “Nothing became him in life so much as his leaving it”. Queen Charlotte (consort to George III), another German, managed English with a heavy Teutonic accent and was famously ugly, especially her flaring nostrils – might have made it hard for turning up her nose at lesser breeds.

Royal (and other) children often fared badly in ancient times. Jehovah's slaying of the first-born of Egypt included (Exodus 13. 29) the Pharaoh's. If this was Ramses II, he could well spare one infant, having sired 52 sons, which makes naming of a contraceptive brand after him somewhat risible. If (a big IF, mentioned only in Matthew 2. 16, nowadays much doubted) Herod did order a ‘Massacre of the Innocents’, this applied only to Bethlehem, and Herod paid a suitable price with his hideous death from ‘The King's Disease’.

Of the many Old Testament pogroms that included children, that of Jehu (2 Kings 10. 6-8) stands out. At his orders, “They took the king's sons and slew 70 persons and put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jezeel” where the royal recipient decreed: “Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gates until the morning”

Plenty of mass slaughters, with some attention to exotic detail, especially (1 Kings 2. 9) “I will cut off him that pisseth against the wall” – a policy that might deter binge-drinkers from high street urination.

Not that the pagans could talk. Agamemnon had no objection to sacrificing daughter Iphigenia to procure a fair sailing to Troy – he got the winds up – whilst Medea butchered her children to spite husband Jason for playing away, also burning his bit of totty alive with a poisoned frock – just cutting up his ties and suits would have been too tame.

Royal infants fell like ninepins to Alexander's mother Olympias. The lucky ones got off with being poisoned. Little prince Caranus and princess Europa (+ mum, in some versions: Pausanias, bk8 ch7 para7) she roasted alive on a barbecue – “The queen mother went rather beyond her brief,” quipped Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon* (1976, p141).

Good to know that Cassander (one of Alexander's many successor generals) had Olympias stoned to death before (Pausanias,

bk. ch7 para2) poisoning Alexander's surviving sons – she had already liquidated his half-brother, the mentally-defective Arridæus.

Cassander met a Herod-like fate: “He swelled full of waters and his body bred worms” (Pausanias); his son and successor Philip soon expired “of a wasting disease”.

“Oh, Lord God, have mercy/All crimes are paid” – Sex Pistols, ‘God Save the Queen’.

At Rome, Tacitus (*Annals*, bk1 ch3) suggests Livia poisoned Augustus's grandsons Gaius and Lucius to procure the succession for her own son Tiberius. This was murderous musical chairs: Augustus had liquidated Cæsarion, alleged son of Cæsar and Cleopatra, also dragging Antony's son from an altar and butchering him.

Tacitus and Suetonius variously report that when Caligula was assassinated, his infant daughter had her brains “dashed out against a pillar” – mind you, the brat was notorious for biting and eye-scratching her playmates; Claudius's daughter Octavia, betrothed to one man at seven, was then married off to Nero who had her steam-bathed to death – for good measure, he had stepson Crispinus drowned by slaves while fishing.

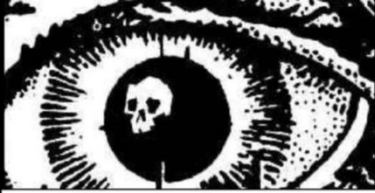
According to the Augustan History's *Lives of Caracalla* (ch2 para2) and Geta (ch2 para9), Septimius Severus's sons and successors, the former had the latter slaughtered in their mother's arms – Dio Cassius (*Roman History*, k67 ch2 paras3-4) has him whimpering “Mother, I am being murdered,” no great feat of deduction since he was being chased by sword-brandishing centurions. Caracalla has the better line, ‘Sit divus dum non sit vivus’ (Let him be a god as long as he's under the sod).

All this makes Richard III's alleged disposal of the ‘Princes in the Tower’ seem tame. Best example of brotherly love since Cain and Abel. Were Harry or Wills ever thus tempted? And would Charles have noticed?

No change with Christianity. Constantine had son Crispus executed, then steamed-bathed wife Fausta to death, suspecting she had set the lad up. At his death, there was (in Gibbon's unimprobable phrase) “a precautionary massacre” of most of Constantine's relatives; cf. RW Burgess, ‘The Summer of Blood,’ *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 62 (2008), 5-51.

Leo II was proclaimed emperor at seven, poisoned 10 months into his reign by mother Ariadne. The apparent nadir was Irene's blinding of son Constantine VI, albeit not much deserving of our tears, since he'd blinded his own uncle and cut out the tongues of his father's quartet of half brothers.

“So it goes” – Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*



GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE examines a new and unlikely sounding explanation for ghostly experiences

MOULDY OLD GHOSTS

A new cause for ghostly experiences is being proposed by a group of researchers from the USA – airborne particles of household mould!

“Experiences reported in many hauntings are similar to mental or neurological symptoms reported by individuals exposed to toxic moulds” is the remarkable claim advanced by Professor Shane Rogers, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, as the latest explanation for seeing ghosts.

His hypothesis is based upon the idea that whilst the psychoactive effects of certain fungi (e.g. ergot) are recognised, the effects of others such as indoor moulds are less researched, raising the possibility that airborne particles of mould ingested by unsuspecting householders adversely affect their brains, triggering frightening hallucinations and sensations of anxiety and fear, duly misinterpreted as a haunting presence.

To test this, with colleagues from Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York, Professor Rogers is setting out on a ghost hunt with a difference. Instead of the usual search for dodgy plumbing, faulty electrics, machinery, standing waves, strange lighting effects, woodworm, death-watch beetles and other insects, rats, mice, birds, noisy neighbours or human pranksters – all of which have been misperceived as ghostly manifestations – he and his team will be seeking out traces of mould. Samples taken from several buildings where ghost sightings have been reported will be compared with samples obtained from properties with no paranormal activity, to check for differences in the types of fungi found within them. Professor Rogers asserts: “Many of the places under investigation and from my own experiences may be prime environments for mould and other indoor air quality issues”.

As with any new theory posited as the explanation for seeing ghosts, his ideas have received extensive media coverage, particularly from British newspapers claiming large housewife and househusband readerships, notably the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*. With perfunctory nods to neuroscience, these claims are endorsed along with observations that spores are linked with “mood swings, hyperactivity, and irrational anger, as well as cognitive impairment” (states with which many readers of these two particular newspapers may be personally familiar in any case) – along with the opinion that “what are termed ghosts might be expected in old buildings that might have damp and mould problems.” (*D.Mail*, *D.Express*, 2 April 2015; http://www.clarkson.edu/news/2015/news-release_2015-03-31-1.html)



LEFT: Professor Shane Rogers (right) and his team sampling the air quality in an allegedly haunted building. **BELOW:** Mannington Hall, Norfolk, site of a famous ghost story.

Thus, all those with responsibilities for house cleaning are subliminally fed the message that living in a dirty or mouldy house could make you end up believing you are being haunted.

Given that currently no one is clear as to the effects (if any) that household moulds have on the brain, this is the type of popular scientific speculation that Fort so loved to lampoon, though at least Professor Rogers is prepared to go out and look. Certainly, if he and his team are perchance correct, it follows that the excessive abundance of haunted properties found in the UK mean that Britons must have the mouldiest homes in the world. Furthermore in future there will be no role for exorcism but simply the application of some ‘Barry Scott’ type cleaning product.

Actually, the New York team are straying more deeply into spiritual territory than they realise, although the Christian ordinance that ‘cleanliness is next to Godliness’ perhaps refers more to the purity of heart, mind and the soul, rather than material dirt. Notably, many exorcists talk of ‘cleansing houses’ and this overlaps with ancient spiritual traditions. For example, the Book of Leviticus contains long provisions on responding to mildew upon clothes or infesting houses (See 13:47-59 and 14:33-53). A visitation of mould and mildew may even be seen as an expression of the wrath of God, for example, Deuteronomy 28:22:

EXORCISTS SPEAK OF ‘CLEANSING’ HOUSES AND THIS OVERLAPS WITH ANCIENT SPIRITUAL BELIEFS



“The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.”

Dusting off my own folder on putative explanations for ghost experiences, I soon retrieve the proposal 20 years ago that ingesting mould and fungal growths on the bindings and pages of antique books might

induce strange reactions. This was proposed in 1995 by Dr RJ Hay, a mycologist and consultant at Guy’s hospital, in an article in the *Lancet* (see *A Natural History of Ghosts*, 2013, by Roger Clarke; ‘Sick Library Syndrome’ by Dr RJ Hay, *Lancet* 346, 16 Dec 1995, pp1573-1574). Dr Hay wrote of the possibility that “fungal hallucinogens” growing on the covers and leaves of old books could lead to intoxication, “enhancement of enlightenment” and visions. Interestingly, Andrew MacKenzie in his *Ghosts and Apparitions* (1982) noticed that a number of witnesses were engaged in reading books when apparitions appeared.

Such a hypothesis might explain the most famous ghost story from Norfolk (aside from the now-discredited story of the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall), the one related by Dr Augustus Jessop after staying at Mannington Hall, the home of Lord Orford, on 10 October 1879. Rather like the narrator in Poe’s *The Raven*, Dr Jessop was up late pouring over “many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore” when he suddenly noticed a hand reaching over his desk. Looking round, he saw the figure of a man with closely cropped ginger hair in a white robe. Not at all perturbed by this apparition, Dr Jessop was captivated by the presence until it seemed to fade away. Was it the case that Dr Jessop – an antiquary, not a medical doctor – had inhaled mould from a book cover, causing him to hallucinate the figure? Unfortunately, later local opinion identified the spectre as being a living Italian servant named Carlos trying to find brandy for a nightcap. (See *The Folklore of East Anglia*, 1974, by Enid Porter).

Coincidentally, Dr Hay’s hypothesis appeared just as Albert Budden’s book *Allergies and Aliens* (1995) linked ghost and alien entity encounters with allergies – though Budden identified the culprit as hypersensitivity to electromagnetic fields, not mould.

However, long before Professor Rogers and Dr Hay, the idea of fungal infections producing a noxious haunting had already been explored in fiction. This was by an unjustly forgotten pair of Victorian ghost story writers, E and H Heron, in their tale *The Story of Konnor Old House* (c.1899). This classic tale – despite a couple of racially

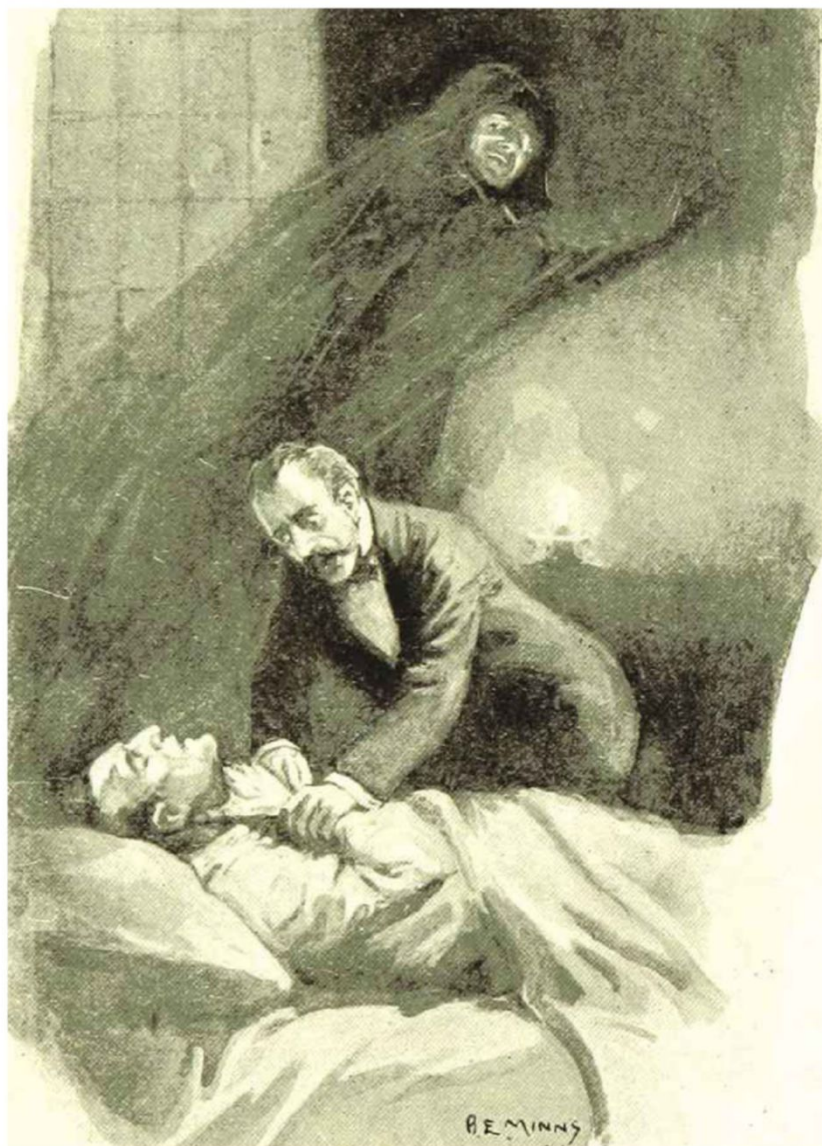


offensive epithets – spins an intriguing mystery featuring lethal manifestations inside a decaying, dust-filled lodge in a remote Scottish valley where the last owner and several other persons have all gone raving mad or died. A strange light is seen glowing outside the building at certain times whilst a ‘Shining Man’ is glimpsed in the stygian gloom within. Strange marks appear on furnishings and a ‘bloodstain’ grows year by year on the ceiling.

A sceptical investigator named Sullivan spends the night inside the property and nearly succumbs, being found ill and raving mad in the morning. On recovering sufficiently, Sullivan tells of how he saw a phosphorescence “of a greenish tint, and as strong as moonlight” and suffered an ‘Old Hag’ nightmare experience, recalling

being overcome by “a clogging weight, such as one feels in nightmare [which] pressed upon him” coupled with “the overpowering physical disgust bred in him by the repulsive odour which passed across his face... By this time the brightness was beginning to dim; dark smears showed through it here and there, which ran slowly together till out of them grew and protruded a fat, black, evil face... Sullivan was aware that the horrible face was sinking down nearer and nearer to his own, while all about it the light changed to black, dripping fluid, that formed great drops and fell.”

Ultimately, it is left to a Mr Flaxman Low, a veritable Sherlock Holmes of the psychic world, to neatly solve the mystery. Piecing together the disparate facts, he finds that the manifestations and instances of insanity have all been caused by a tropical fungus growing unchecked within the property, which lies situated “in a damp valley”. He explains that the fungus “matures very rapidly, and absolutely decays as it matures, liquefying into a sort of dark mucilage, full of spores,



ABOVE: An illustration from one of E & H Heron’s stories concerning occult detective Flaxman Low.



GHOSTWATCH

which drips down, and diffuses a most repulsive odour. In time the mucilage dries, leaving the dust of the spores." These spores are poisonous when inhaled and cause the serial cases of madness and death, whilst the mysterious light is given off by the fungus, it being from an African species possessing "phosphorescent properties, which are manifested not only during decomposition, but also during the period of growth."

How did this African fungus reach the Scottish valley? It turns out that some 20 years earlier the owner of the lodge had been a merchant in Sierra Leone with an African servant called Jake who had later disappeared. Jake is surmised to have been a witchdoctor and obeah practitioner. Eventually the body of Jake is found in a cupboard, covered in phosphorescent dust, thus explaining the 'Shining Man' figure, having inadvertently poisoned himself on his own fungal concoctions. The story ends with the building being burned down since it is impossible to remove the fungal infestation.

All this was imagined around 1899 when scientific mycology was already underway and colonial expeditions were encountering indigenous shamans with knowledge of herbs, plants and fungi. This research was taken forward by professional and amateur botanists in the 20th century and constitutes a huge field of scholarship in its own right. Europe also has an archaic tradition of hallucinogens derived from plants, herbs and fungi (see *The Longest Trip*, 1999, by Paul Devereux) with the fungus ergot that grows on rye and can cause hallucinations being among the best known.

Poisoning by ergot fungi containing lysergic acid (a type of alkaloid naturally made and first synthesised artificially by Albert Hoffman as LSD 25 in 1943) has been blamed for various instances of religious mania in the mediæval period and (less plausibly) for the witchcraft hysteria at Salem. This latter interpretation has been challenged by proponents with psychosocial explanations for paranormal phenomena, but for myself, if it is a choice between at least conceivably testable theories like those of Professor Rogers and the nebulous ideas of 'social strain' and 'cultural pressures', I prefer theories that are potentially open to refutation. (Of course with historical events and personal experiences proving anything is always a forensic challenge, but whilst many scientists have observed the ergot fungus and the associated symptoms no one has yet seen a 'meme'). Possible links between rural witchcraft, ergot and other moulds and the bewitchment of bread were topics I discussed in 2000 with the folklorist and historian, the late Dr Hilda Ellis Davidson (1914-2006), and her husband. They suggested that the chemicals in rowan tree leaves might counteract moulds – hence the protective function of the rowan tree against witchcraft in folklore. I have also wondered about the traditional connections between



ABOVE: Charlton House, home to a 'magic mushroom'. BELOW: Ergot fungus growing on an ear of wheat.



fairy lore, childbirth and stories featuring midwives and whether a link may lie with the use of extracts of ergot to induce labour – with the modern drug ergometrine used today in maternity hospitals.

Personally speaking, I have only had one experience that connects a paranormal manifestation with a specimen of fungi – albeit a wooden ornament carved into the shape of a mushroom. This occurred on 30 July 1999 at a ghost vigil organised by the Ghost Club at the reputedly haunted Charlton House, a Jacobean mansion in Eltham, south London. At 11.20pm during a period when small groups of investigators were waiting in semi-darkness in different rooms, we were all suddenly shaken by a loud bang echoing through the upper storey. The noise coincided with the unexplained

movement of the mushroom ornament placed as a trigger object on a table in one of the rooms, which was found seemingly instantly relocated to a point on the floor. All four persons in the room averred that no one had been near it when its relocation occurred; they did not see it moving and the mushroom did not bounce or roll over the floor but seemed to have been instantly deposited about 12ft (3.6m) from the table. This occurred immediately after another group in an adjacent room, rather bored with the lack of activity, verbally challenged "the ghost of Charlton House" to manifest. Our attempts at reproducing this object movement failed, as whenever we threw the ornament, it bounced and rolled, causing a quite different sound to that which resonated through the upper floor. For me this object movement remains inexplicable to this day. Inevitably, the ornament – carved from a piece of wood originating from a beam at Ely Cathedral – was dubbed 'the magic mushroom'...

Finally, from a folkloric angle, plans to confront mould and fungus might be approved by ghosts themselves. In the traditions and lore of household spirits from Europe to Latin America, there is a longstanding belief that domestic spirits hate dirty homes, and that entities may cause problems if houses are not swept and cleaned. Feelings of dislike of mould and grime can surely also be detected in the words of a Viking 'draugr' ghost from Norway which mournfully declared:

"Twere better walking on the floor,
Down at Kvaslot as of old,
Than lying here in Herjus-dale
'Neath unconsecrated mould"
(See 'The Draugr' in *Scandinavian Folk-Lore*, 1896, by William Craigie).

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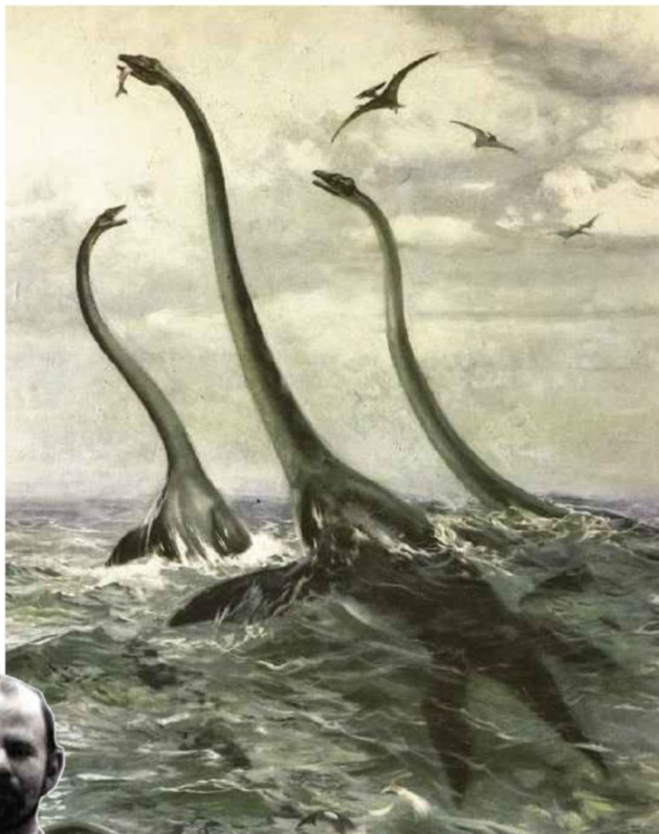
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UNNATURAL HISTORY

How the Loch Ness mystery led to a High Court battle and the controversial sacking of an eminent zoologist

Secret files made public under the Freedom of Information Act have revealed the furore that ensued when an eminent zoologist was fired from the Natural History Museum in 1960 after publically claiming to have spotted the Loch Ness Monster. Dr Denys Tucker (pictured right, along with the NHM), a world authority on eels, fought a seven-year legal battle to be reinstated, attempting to sue the museum's trustees for damages and wrongful dismissal. The trustees were led by Lord Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and included Harry Hylton-Foster, Speaker of the House of Commons, two viscounts and a marquess. Whitehall officials were deeply agitated by Dr Tucker's High Court challenge to his sacking, fearing that, if he won his claim, "HMG will never again be able to fire a civil servant, except possibly for sedition or larceny". In the end, he lost his battle for reinstatement, but not before it had been all the way to the Court of Appeal.

After wartime service with the RAF in India, Dr Tucker had joined the British Museum of Natural History (as it then was) in 1949 as a scientific officer in the zoology department. He was widely regarded as one of its more brilliant researchers, rapidly ascending the ranks to become the museum's chief scientist in 1958. However, he was a maverick unafraid to challenge scientific orthodoxy. In 1959 he published a research paper seeking to overturn one of the great discoveries of the 20th century in his field: that European freshwater eels swam across the Atlantic to mate and die in the Sargasso Sea. His research paper in *Nature* caused uproar by suggesting that mature European eels could not make the 3,000-mile (4,800km) journey through the



ocean currents. Instead, he suggested European eels were in fact a sub-mutation of the American eels born in the Sargasso Sea that headed east

after hatching. The theory was hailed as ingenious by some of his fellow eel experts; but it was also, as he later admitted, "shot to smithereens" after it emerged he had based it on an astute reading of research rather than field trips.

It was also in 1959 that he wrote to *New Scientist*: "I, a professional marine zoologist, did see a large hump travelling across flat calm water on 22 March 1959,

TOP: The Natural History Museum, London. CENTRE: An artist's impression of Elasmosaurus, which Dr Tucker claimed was the only possible identity of the Loch Ness Monster. BOTTOM: Dr Denys Tucker.

and do quite unashamedly assert that it belonged to an unnamed animal. I am quite satisfied that we have in Loch Ness one of the most exciting and important problems in British zoology today." He asserted that the creature could only have been an Elasmosaurus, a sub-species of the long-necked plesiosaurs that roamed the earth 80 million years ago.

While Dr Tucker's announcement fired the starting pistol on three decades of concerted scientific effort to try to solve the mystery, his superiors were less impressed. One queried whether the Loch Ness Monster was a "suitable topic" for a lead researcher and questions were also asked about his disciplinary record, which included memos musing on the sexual proclivities of his colleagues and an incident in which he was rumoured to have produced a service revolver kept in his desk and waved it at a manager.

On 31 July 1960, Dr Tucker was called to the office of the museum's director, Terence Morrison-Scott, and told he was being dismissed and barred indefinitely from the museum's collection. The reason for his sacking by the board of trustees was given as "long, continued, vexatious, insubordinate and generally offensive conduct towards the museum's director and other senior staff". He never held an academic post again and remained convinced that the establishment were involved in an attempt to cover up his findings at Loch Ness. Shortly before his death in 2009, aged 87, he told Oliver Crimmen, the Natural History Museum's curator of fish, that "the Loch Ness monster is still a concrete material problem". *Independent*, 18 April; *mirror.co.uk*, 19 April 2015.

A^Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden



IT'S STAR CLAWS!

In a freshwater creek far, far away lives a spectacular species of red-and-white crayfish with huge blue-and-white claws, compared in media accounts to the multicoloured appearance of an interstellar galaxy and therefore inevitably dubbed 'Star Claws'. In May 2015, this striking crustacean was at last scientifically described, and was formally named *Cherax pulcher* – more than a decade after its discovery. Back in 2003 German naturalist Christian Lukhaup received from a friend a photograph of one such specimen, and recognised straight away from its unique coloration that this was something completely new. Consequently, he was then surprised to discover that this tricoloured shellfish was already well known in the pet trade – but where did it live in the wild? Pet shop owners were reluctant to provide Lukhaup with any details concerning its origin, but eventually he tracked it down to a creek in Papua New Guinea, one that was so obscure that it wasn't even marked on any maps, and genetic tests

duly confirmed that 'Star Claws' was indeed a distinct, valid species. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/new-species-crayfish-might-red-5763877> 26 May 2015.

BRINGING A SKY BEAST DOWN TO EARTH

One of the most intriguing theories for the identity of certain UFOs is that they actually constitute huge undiscovered living organisms, popularly dubbed sky beasts, that live their entire lives inhabiting the upper reaches of our planet's atmosphere, never descending to the ground. An uncommonly clear video posted on YouTube by Anton Ilmyanov on 18 May 2015, and attracting considerable interest online thereafter, portrayed what some investigators believed may be one such entity – an immense pink blob-like form with a warty outer surface and many long tentacle-like appendages hanging vertically downwards from its undersurface. In reality, however, what it proved to be was something very different – for the video, claimed to have been shot from



a jet aeroplane shortly after taking off from Queenstown in New Zealand, was actually an educational film specifically created to demonstrate how easy it is to produce fake UFO videos using CGI effects. Thanks to longstanding friend Mike Playfair for alerting me to the original video, and to Facebook colleague Paul Cuffe for bringing to my attention the educational video's presence on a Russian website. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MG2ZZbliOeo> 18 May 2015; <http://habrahabr.ru/post/258775/> 26 May 2015.

A GIANT SALAMANDER IN CALIFORNIA?

Only three species of giant salamander are known to exist today – one in China (up to 6ft/1.8m long), a second in Japan (up to 5ft/1.5m long), and a third (the so-called hellbender *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*, up to 2.5ft/76cm long) confined to the eastern USA. However, there is a long history of reports describing apparent giant salamanders in the Western USA too, especially in California's Trinity Alps, but no such animals have ever been confirmed, and none have even been reported for some time now. In March 2015, however, I received a detailed account of an alleged giant salamander seen just a few years ago in California by an eyewitness who asks not to be identified in print. Let's call her Prunella.

Prunella saw it while walking early one morning in 2005 with a child in Redwood Park, Arcata, just after it had rained. She claimed that the creature was huge, measuring 4-5ft (1.2-1.5m) long (hence much bigger than the hellbender), walking slowly with its body raised well off the ground, with very smooth, shiny, slimy skin, and possessing a newt-like head rather than the typically flat head of known giant salamanders. It was orange with black markings, and Prunella considered that although far greater in size and with much bigger legs, it looked in basic form and coloration somewhat (but not entirely) like a known species from this region – California's coastal giant salamander *Dicamptodon tenebrosus* – although as this species' known maximum length barely exceeds 1ft (30cm), the adjective 'giant' in its name is something of a misnomer. Prunella also stated that a slightly smaller but otherwise similar specimen to the one that she'd encountered had previously been seen in the same location by the boyfriend of one of her work colleagues.

Could these creatures have been freakishly over-sized specimens of *D. tenebrosus*, with their huge size (if estimated accurately) having possibly been induced by hormonal hyper-secretion, or were they representatives of a still-undescribed fourth species of true giant salamander? Does anyone else have details of recent sightings of such animals in California or elsewhere in the Western US? If so, *FT* would be delighted to receive details. *Prunella, pers. comms, 1+6 Mar 2015.*

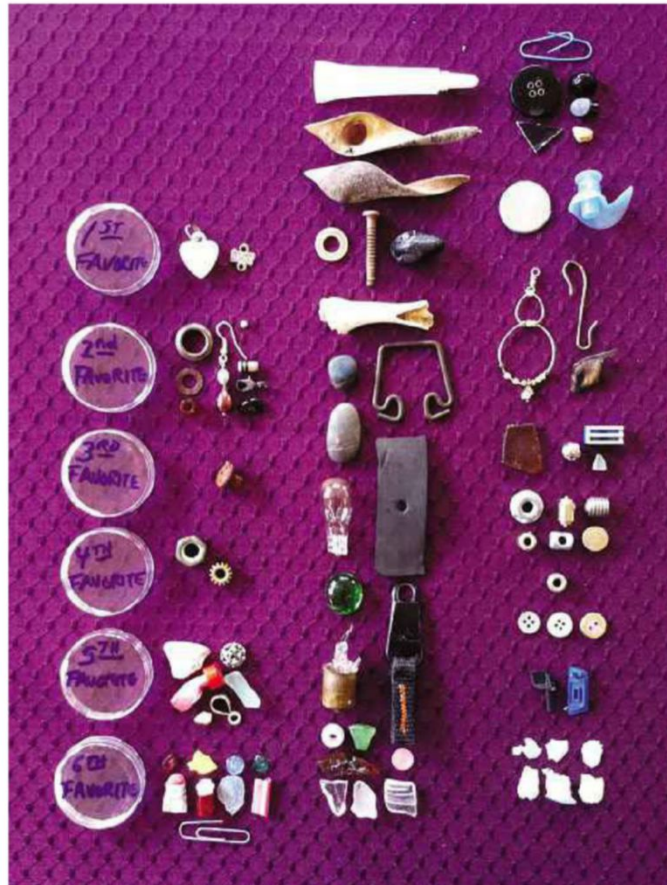
CROWS BEARING GIFTS

CLEVER CORVIDS REWARD HUMAN BENEFACTORS WITH AN ASTONISHING ARRAY OF GOODIES

Gabi Mann, an eight-year-old girl from Seattle, feeds the crows in her garden and they bring her gifts in return. She has quite a collection, which she stores in little plastic bags with a note of when the item appeared. There's a broken light bulb, brown glass worn smooth by the sea, a black zip, a miniature silver ball, a black button, a blue paper clip, a yellow bead, a faded black piece of foam, a blue Lego piece, and many more, including her favourite, a pearl-coloured heart.

When she was four, Gabi was prone to dropping food. She'd get out of the car, and a chicken nugget would tumble off her lap. A crow would rush in to recover it. Soon, the crows were watching for her. As she got older, she rewarded their attention by sharing her packed lunch on the way to the bus stop. Her brother joined in. Soon, crows were lining up in the afternoon to greet Gabi's bus. Gabi's mother Lisa didn't mind that crows consumed most of the school lunches she packed, glad that her children loved animals and were willing to share. In 2013, Gabi and Lisa started offering food as a regular daily ritual. Each morning, they fill the backyard birdbath with fresh water and cover bird-feeder platforms with peanuts. Gabi throws handfuls of dog food into the grass. As they work, crows assemble on the telephone lines, calling loudly to them. It was after they adopted this routine that the gifts started appearing. The crows would clear the feeder of peanuts, and leave shiny trinkets on the empty tray; an earring, a hinge, a polished stone.

Lisa regularly photographs the crows and charts their behaviour and interactions. Her most amazing gift came early in 2015, when she lost a lens cap in a nearby alley while photographing a



LEFT: Some of the gifts left for Gabi Mann and her family by the crows. BELOW: Gabi and her corvid friends.

bald eagle as it circled over the neighbourhood. She didn't even have to look for it. It was sitting on the edge of the birdbath. Lisa logged on to her computer and pulled up their bird-cam. There was the crow she suspected. "You can see it walking the lens cap to the birdbath," she said, "and it actually spends time rinsing it. I'm sure that it was intentional. They watch us all the time. I'm sure they knew I dropped it and decided they wanted to return it."

Following this news story in the *BBC News Magazine*, many readers

emailed reports of similar avian benevolence. Lynn Witte (somewhere in the US) nursed an injured baby crow that she called

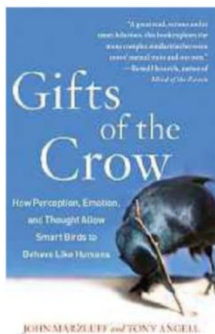
Sheryl Crow. The bird eventually learnt to fly. "My first [gift] was presented to me with her wings splayed open and head bowed," said Ms Witte. "I was very ceremoniously handed a yellow foam dart from a toy gun. She refused to take the dart back as she does when we play games. I felt truly honoured." Subsequent gifts included a Santa figurine, bottle caps, screws, fishing bobbers, even a feather from a bird – but never food or dead animals.

Katie Ross (Mukilteo, WA) feeds her backyard crows every day, and often receives gifts on her porch railing: shiny polished rocks from the neighbour's landscaping, bright red bits of yarn, or dead insects. Alex Fischer (Santa Fe, NM) regularly put out food for a raven, and one day it brought him the small wooden handle of a tool, perhaps a chisel.

Alison Alcoba (Seattle, WA) fed her crows peanuts, and they brought her gifts, toys mostly, all left in the birdbath. "Our cat Black Bart used to play with the local crows," she said. "When Bart was killed by a coyote one early morning, it was the distress call of the crows that alerted us to what was left of his body. A week to the day after Bart died, we were awakened by a similar racket. When we went outside to see what the noise was about, there were about 40 crows in our yard, and below them, right on the spot where we found Bart's body the week before, was the collar he had been wearing, complete with name tag. That was the kindest gift of all and it gave us closure."

The crow family, *Corvidae*, includes ravens, jays and magpies. Amethyst Selma-Selene (Stockport) bought a Victorian pentacle pendant but lost it after a week. "Three weeks later," she wrote, "on a Sunday morning, I

The crows would leave shiny trinkets on the feeder



190: THE LONG-DEAD HEAVENS



ABOVE: A crow in Dubai collects packets of sugar; might they be a gift for someone?

was off to my little shop when three magpies started to swoop down at me chattering loudly. Then they swooped down on to the road near the edge of the pavement. This went on for about three minutes until I stepped out on to the road to try and avoid them. It was then I noticed my Victorian pentacle shining on the road. They were showing me where it was, and I was amazed to find it again.”

Rick Zevering (Mountshannon, Co Clare, Ireland) wrote: “In 1994, in Leusden, Holland, where I lived, I found a young crow that had fallen out of the nest. I named the crow Gorre, and he soon became a rather dominant member of my household. He was extremely jealous of just about anybody touching me or even talking to me. He had a very obvious sense of humour – pulling loose my shoelaces while I was reading the newspaper then quickly hiding behind a cupboard or sneaking up on the cats from behind while they were eating. He would hack them viciously in the tail, which made them flee and then help himself to the cat food.

“Gorre adored me and gave me presents all the time. Mostly in the form of cat food that he had stolen, but occasionally he would bring me a stone, the lid of a milk bottle, a feather, a big live beetle and small branches or leaves. He would fly into the house, land on my leg and would then deposit his gift in my outstretched hand.

This happened so frequently that I decided to put down a tray on a cupboard where all the items were kept. If I asked him to put it in the tray he would fly over to the cupboard and very meticulously place his latest gift among the others. Next door to us they were barbecuing and he landed on the barbecue, stole a sausage and brought it straight back to me, an act that caused some tension between the neighbours and us. Eventually more neighbours started to complain about Gorre. He would sit in front of a car at the parking lot and refuse to leave, or he would attack the neighbours’ cats. It was with pain in my heart that I eventually had to move him to a forest 10km [six miles] away. I never saw him again.”

Crows usually pair for life. They spend much of their courtship during the breeding season presenting gifts of food to their mates to maintain the pair bond. Young crows will share objects as well as food to establish relationships with other birds, not just their partners. The fact that crows bestow presents on particular humans is not surprising; research has shown that they recognise individual human faces and can remember them for years. For more about crow behaviour, see *Gifts of the Crow* (2012) by John Marzluff and Tony Angell and *Caw of the Wild* (2005) by Barb Kirpluk. *BBC News Magazine*, 25 Feb + 10 Mar; *New Scientist*, 17 Mar 2015.

The myth

When you look up into the night sky – arm-in-arm, perhaps, with your sweetie – the stars you are seeing aren’t really there. Because light takes so long to travel to the Earth from faraway suns, you are actually seeing the ghostly shining of stars that died long ago.

The “truth”

Makes you feel humble, doesn’t it? Makes you realise that space is, as the great philosopher said, “big”. When I was at school this was one of the very few facts we knew about stars – so it’s no real surprise to find out that it isn’t true. With the naked eye, about 6,000 stars can be seen, almost all of which are within 1,000 light years of our own Sol. This means that the oldest starlight we can expect to see is less than 10,000 years old. Since the life expectancy of stars is measured in billions (or sometimes mere millions) of years, the chances of a star dying during the relatively brief time in which its light is still travelling towards the Earth are very slight indeed. Statistically, there’s no doubt that pretty well all the stars we can see are still functional.

Sources

www.slate.com/blogs/bad_astronomy/2013/08/13/are_the_stars_you_see_in_the_sky_already_dead.html; www.universetoday.com/113709/are-all-the-stars-really-dead

Disclaimer

The myth, remember, is that all, or most, or even many of the stars in our night sky are already dead; no one is suggesting that it can *never* happen to the odd example here or there. But if you have data that shines a different light on that, please beam it to FT’s letters page.

Mythchaser

Is there any scientific evidence, or a decent theory, to suggest that adding oil to the water in which you boil your spaghetti will prevent the pasta clumping? And please hurry with your answer to this one, because the reader who asked it can’t start her dinner until she’s heard from you.



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SERPENT STORIES

HOMING BURMESE PYTHONS, PARTHENOGENETIC BOA CONSTRICTOR, SNAKY STOWAWAYS, INDIAN COBRA WEDDINGS AND OTHER OPHIDIAN ODDITIES



LEFT: A python hunter in the Everglades shows off the size of his snake. BELOW: Thelma the reticulated python.

- Burmese pythons, among the world's largest snakes, have a built-in compass that allows them to slither home in a near-straight line even if released many miles away. No other snake species has been shown to have a similar homing ability. The Asian reptiles, which can grow up to 20ft (6m) long, have taken up residence in South Florida's Everglades National Park since the 1980s, probably after being released as unwanted pets. They have adapted so well to their new habitat that they now pose a serious threat to several species that they hunt as prey. Scientists captured six of the pythons in the Everglades, placed them in sealed, plastic containers, and drove them to locations between 13 and 22 miles (21-36km) away. They implanted radio trackers in the animals and followed their movements with GPS readings from a small fixed-wing plane, measuring their direction and speed.

All the snakes immediately oriented themselves towards the place where they were captured, with five of the six returning to within three miles (4.8km) of that spot. The sixth veered somewhat



off course as it was nearing its destination. The snakes travelled between 94 and 296 days, displaying "high motivation to reach home locations", according to the study, published in the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters*. "This study provides evidence that Burmese pythons have navigational map and compass senses," the authors wrote. Such navigational skills suggest the python has a razor-sharp sense of territoriality. This could help combat the species in places where it is unwanted by predicting where the snake is likely to spread. Burmese pythons

The snakes displayed "high motivation to reach home"

eat everything from tiny birds to deer and even alligators. They swallow their food whole. For a dramatic 2005 photograph of a python that apparently died while swallowing an alligator in the Everglades National Park, see FT204:9. [AFP] 20 Mar 2014.

- In 2010, a female boa constrictor twice gave birth to offspring without mating. The genetic make-up of her 22 babies was unlike any previously recorded among vertebrates. The captive-born reptile gave birth while being housed with four male snakes at North Carolina State University, but DNA tests showed that none was the father. This was the first known instance of a virgin birth among boa snakes; but snake parthenogenesis is probably more common than previously thought. In 2012, it was recorded for the first time in the world's longest snake species. In June that year, an 11-year-old reticulated python called Thelma – 20ft (6m) long and weighing 200lb (90kg) – laid a clutch of 61 eggs at the Louisville Zoo in Kentucky.

As Thelma had lived for four years with another female python called Louise and had not had any male company, zookeepers assumed the eggs were infertile, but in September six healthy babies were hatched. At first these were attributed to stored sperm, but genetic testing confirmed that they were produced by the mother alone. The research revealed that offspring were the result of terminal fusion automixis, a process whereby cells known as polar bodies fuse with the egg to trigger cell division, effectively acting as sperm. Parthenogenesis is being observed in more and more species, including birds and sharks, but remains unexplained. *Metro*, 4 Nov; *Sun*, 10 Nov 2010; *dailymail.co.uk*, 24 Oct; *independent.co.uk*, 26 Oct 2014.

- A man in central India killed a venomous snake by biting it after he saw it slithering towards him in bed. Rai Singh from Chhattisgarh said he feared the blue krait was about to bite him and decided to do the same. "I tried to shoo it away with a stick but it attacked me," he said. "I bit it." Kraits are one of the four poisonous snakes

that account for the most attacks in India, where 50,000 people are killed by venomous bites every year. The krait is nocturnal and often enters homes at night during the monsoon season to keep dry. Its bites rarely cause pain and often go unnoticed by their victims as they sleep. They are, however, highly venomous and up to 80 per cent of their victims die after suffering progressive paralysis.

There has been a series of attacks on snakes on the Indian subcontinent in recent years, when they were fatally bitten by people who feared they were the prey. A gonds tribesman fishing in a river in Madhya Pradesh in 2013 bit a snake and snapped it in half after it bit his hand. The year before, a farmer in Nepal bit to death a cobra that attacked him as he worked in a rice paddy. "Snakes are the most misunderstood creatures and often victims of a lack of information and awareness," said animal rights campaigner Pooja Bhale. "People react in panic without considering whether the snake is venomous or not." *D.Telegraph, 21 Aug 2014.*

- A reticulated python, over 16ft 5in (5m) long, was found dead, floating in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Rishton, Lancashire, on 1 March 2015. It was thought to be between 12 and 15 years old. Experts said it could have been living in the wild for days and was capable of attacking a human (though its usual diet is rabbits and rats). An autopsy showed signs of respiratory disease, which could have contributed to its death. *Sun, 4 Mar; D.Telegraph, 5 Mar 2015.*

- Jarred Smith, 22, got the shock of his life when he found a diamond python in a box of cereal at his home in northern Sydney. "The python was over 2m [6.5ft] long and I couldn't believe it was jammed into this small cereal box," said Chris McGreal from the New South Wales wildlife rescue service. "When I got there I actually had to tear the box to get it out, that's how tightly squeezed in it was.



ABOVE: Snaky surprise – this 16ft 5in reticulated python was found dead, floating in the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in March.

It's likely it was hiding in there to feel secure." Fortunately, diamond pythons are non-venomous but they can still leave a nasty bite. *Independent, D.Telegraph, 10 Mar 2015.*

- Warehouse workers in Ipswich, Suffolk, unloading a cargo of Malaysian timber on 24 April, were shocked to find a mildly venomous snake. The 3ft (90cm) -long black and yellow striped mangrove snake survived a journey of 6,000 miles (9,700km). "He must have been in that crate for more than six weeks, with no access to food or water, so was very dehydrated and thin," said RSPCA inspector Jason Finch. "He is now doing well, though, in specialist RSPCA care." *East Anglian Daily Times, 29 April 2015.*

- Other out-of-place snakes found in April included a 3ft (90cm) white banded Californian kingsnake in an oven in Halliwell, near Bolton; a 4ft (1.2m) corn snake in a bathtub in Norton, Teesside; and a 6ft (1.8m) albino northern pine snake draped over a bathmat on a radiator in Littleborough, Greater Manchester. None of these snakes is venomous. *D.Mail, 9+18 April; Metro, 14 April 2015.*

- Ashley Vernon, 34, rented a van from Leyland Van Hire on 12 May and was driving along the

A500 to Stoke with his friend Mark Donnelly. He said: "Mark told me there was a walking stick under the seat. Then he realised it was a [3ft/1.2m] snake. It tried to bite him so he shoved it in the glove box." Mr Vernon, from Croston in Lancashire, added: "I was petrified. I have a phobia of snakes. I was allowed to have the van until the next day, but I took it straight back." *D.Mail, 19 May 2015.*

- When a pickup stalled on a street in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a 7ft (2m), 20lb (9kg) brown and yellow python was found slithering across the engine block. It was thought to have crawled into the pickup at the motorist's home several blocks from where the vehicle stalled, most likely because the python had dislodged an electrical wire. *[AP] 11 July 2014.*

- Police nearly caused a riot on 4 April 2015 when they raided an Indian temple to stop a lovelorn peasant marrying a *nagin* (a female cobra). Sandeep Patel, 27, was convinced the snake had been a beautiful woman in a previous life and had now fallen in love with him. He claimed that in an earlier life he had been an *ichhadhari naag* (a shape-changing male snake in Indian folklore) and that he could turn into a snake at night after going into a deep trance.

Up to 15,000 people flocked

to watch the ceremony in the remote village of Badwapur in Phoolpur state. Patel, who arrived wearing just trousers and a white vest, was soon garlanded with colourful flowers by the crowd. The saffron-robed priest conducting the marriage in the Shiva temple told the crowd that Patel had "exhibited traits of a snake" since childhood, adding: "Sandeep walks, drinks and flickers his tongue just like a snake." But the priest ran away when armed police burst into the temple after being tipped off about the bizarre wedding. When Sandeep and his father Dayashankar, a farmer, were arrested for "breaching the peace", the disappointed crowd threatened to riot and police reinforcements had to be called in to disperse them.

Nine years ago a 30-year-old Indian woman called Bimbala Das married a cobra at the village of Tala in Orissa. Priests chanted mantras for an hour as she sat in a temple wearing her best silk sari. Unfortunately the snake, said to live in a nearby ant hill, failed to turn up; so Bimbala held a brass replica instead. She said later: "Though snakes cannot speak or understand, we communicate in a peculiar way. The cobra has never harmed me." Her neighbours in the village claimed the wedding would bring good fortune. *Times of India, mirror.co.uk, 6 April; MX News (Sydney), 7 April 2015.*



the UFO files

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DR DAVID CLARKE & PETER BROOKESMITH
PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST
FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

FROM 'SMOKING GUN' TO #EPICFAIL

What a difference two months makes. When we last mentioned the Roswell slides (**FT326:26**) the net was buzzing with the prospect of new revelations concerning ufology's elusive Holy Grail. In February, a promotional video posted on YouTube enticed viewers with the promise of colour images dating from 1947 that showed "an unusual body in a glass case": a humanoid creature with a large head and small body. Was it an alien from Roswell? Promoter Adam Dew would not be drawn but the implication was obvious.

Doubters were assured that experts had examined the two colour Kodachrome slides and confirmed their authenticity and 1940s date. That did not, of course, prove the body shown was not human or that it was connected with the Roswell incident. Sceptics suspected it was a mummified child and pointed to similar images of cadavers from ancient Egypt and South America. But the secret cabal that runs the Roswell industry had no time for such inconvenient questions and dismissed the mummy theory as "laughable".

They promised the truth would be revealed on 5 May before a live audience at the National Auditorium in Mexico City. But access to the truth comes at a cost. The beWITNESS event (as it was titled) was ticket-only; or, for \$20, you could watch online. Warning bells rang when it emerged that Mexican UFO pundit Jaime Maussan was master of proceedings. Maussan is notorious for his promotion of a range of dubious photographs and videos of UFOs and assorted alien creatures. It emerged that Dew, whose day job is promoting college sports videos, was friends with the owner of the slides and held copyright through his company Slidebox Media. Dew turned to Tom Carey and Donald Schmitt, authors of *Witness to Roswell* (2007), for help in producing a film about the slides and, joined by Anthony Braglia and other members of the so-called 'Roswell Dream Team', one thing had led to another. But as their date with destiny approached even big-name pro-Roswell ufologists such as Stan Friedman distanced themselves from the hype surrounding the event.

The live extravaganza planned by Maussan looked decidedly shaky even before the key



LEFT: The supposed Roswell photos were said to have been authenticated as 1940s Kodachrome slides. BELOW: The dead alien turned out to be a mummified child.

remaining eye-witness to Roswell had confirmed this is what he saw", and the octogenarian says that "they are certainly not human" and "look like what the little greys look like".

According to Red Pill Junkie, punters endured two and a half hours of padding before they got to see the first slide. Even then, "instead of a collective gasp or people standing in ovation there was just silence... my...reaction was 'man, it *still* looks like a mummy!'" Disappointed punters took to social media to vent

their frustration and anger: @JohnELTenney tweeted: "Maybe I've just been doing this a long time, [but] I feel safe in saying these are some of the worst real alien photos I've seen", while @critiancontini summed up the reaction thus: "#roswellslides: A photo of a child mummy, an #epicfail NOT a smoking gun. Shame on ufologists". By the time UFO disclosure pundit Richard Dolan took to the stage to proclaim the slides as "difficult to debunk" the game was already up. As many observers noted, 5 May 2015 was also the 20th anniversary of the day Ray Santilli's fake 'alien autopsy' film (opposite) was unveiled at an event in London (see **FT81:41-43**). But in truth the provenance of the slides exhibited in Mexico City and their supposed links with

players took to the stage. On his Mysterious Universe blog Nick Redfern described it as "the biggest soap opera since Dallas". A guest blogger for the Daily Grail website, Red Pill Junkie, who attended the event, reported that ticket prices ranged from \$20-\$86 (£12-55) for a ringside seat. He estimated that between six and seven thousand people were present in the venue, which could have held 10,000. As the event began, Maussan introduced assorted 'experts' who pronounced the images as genuine and definitely not showing anything that originated on Earth. Of the big names promised, former astronaut and UFO believer Edgar Mitchell, 84, failed to show up. But a film was shown of him being interviewed by Maussan. The promoter assures Mitchell that "the last





the Roswell incident were even more tenuous than those claimed by Santilli.

In some respects the way ufology is practised has changed little in the past half century. An individual or group announces to the media that it has discovered a 'smoking gun', usually in the form of a photograph, a document or an extraordinary story, that proves UFOs (by which they mean ET craft) have visited Earth, and the facts have been covered up. Think MJ-12, assorted images of aliens or crashed UFOs, deathbed confessions from military insiders and so forth. But in contrast to how science is done in the real world, ufology has never been an empirical discipline and, for its proponents, belief has become the arbiter of the evidence, rather than the evidence being the test of the claims. As UFO pundit Isaac Koi put it, ufologists like to keep material to themselves, while simultaneously claiming that it would withstand any amount of independent testing. But "when the material eventually emerges, it often collapses rather suddenly and dramatically."

The behaviour and motivations of ufologists may not have changed, but the speed at which the rest of the world critically evaluates their claims has altered dramatically. The dizzying speed and power of the Internet to produce instant results has turned the old ufology on its head. In this case, the images on the slides were subject to forensic scrutiny by the Roswell Slides Research Group (RSRG), whose diverse membership included Koi from the UK, Paul Kimball and Chris Rutkowski from Canada and assorted independent experts from Europe, the US, and further afield. The implacable mystery that members of the Roswell 'Dream Team' claimed had resisted explanation for almost three years was solved by RSRG's 12 members in so many days.

Even before a high-resolution image from the slides became available, Adam Dew's YouTube trailer briefly revealed a glimpse of one of them. This allowed RSRG members to obtain a screen grab that was quickly shared around the world. On his blog Nick Redfern pointed out the hair-covered head of some strange animal, accompanied by a label, was visible in the display behind the remains of the 'body'. Nick suspected this pointed to both figures being exhibits in a freak-show or small town museum. But a bigger give-away was the large placard visible on the glass in front of the 'alien' body. In their presentation Schmitt and Carey were insistent that top

photographic experts had failed in their attempts to decipher the fuzzy words despite extensive examination.

The *coup de grace* was delivered by the RSRG's Nab Lator who employed a piece of commercially-available software, Smart DeBlur, to clean up the troublesome text. On 11 May the group announced the words "MUMMIFIED BODY OF TWO YEAR OLD BOY" could now be discerned. The remainder of the caption read: "at the time of burial the body was clothed in a slip-over cotton shirt. Burial wrappings consisted of three small cotton blankets... loaned by Mr SL Palmer, San Francisco, California". As the group explained, "the entire effort only took hours, quite a difference from the 'years' of research claimed by the slides promoters... the mystery of the placard is solved, and so is the nature of the body. It was a boy, from Earth." A Native America boy whose remains, it emerged, had been excavated from pueblo ruins in 1894 and donated to the Park Museum in Mesa Verde, Colorado.

Conclusive as this debunking was, the promoters initially refused to give in, claiming the resolution was itself a Photoshop hoax by the RSRG. But by now their protestations seemed irrelevant and, one by one, members of the group began to cave in. On 14 May Schmitt confessed that "the image in the slides is a mummy". As the RSRG put it: "The [only] question that remains is whether or not the slides' promoters have been deliberately deceiving the public in order to profit financially, or whether they were simply incompetent. Perhaps it was a mixture of both. Either way, their credibility as investigators and researchers has been destroyed."

At the end of the day, the #RoswellSlides saga demonstrates one enduring ufological truism: extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Or as Pierre-Simon Laplace put it: "The weight of evidence should be proportioned to the strangeness of the facts."

Sources: Roswell Slides Research Group: www.roswellslides.com/; Curt Collins *Blue Blurry Lines*: www.blueblurrylines.com/; Bob Sheaffer's *Bad UFOs*: <http://badufos.blogspot.co.uk/>; Paul Kimball's *The Other Side of Truth*: <http://redstarfilms.blogspot.co.uk/>; Nick Redfern's *Mysterious Universe*: <http://mysteriousuniverse.org/>; Kevin Randle's *The Other Side of the Truth*: <http://kevinrandle.blogspot.ca/>; Red Pill Junkie, 'The Roswell Slides: Chronicle of a Mummy Foretold', www.dailygrail.com/Essays/2015/5/The-Roswell-Slides-Chronicle-Mummy-Foretold.

DON'T BOTHER ME WITH FACTS

The (Not) Roswell Slides circus had a couple of entertaining sideshows. One featured crop-circle aficionado and old Etonian George Wingfield's resurrection as a deprecator of Roswell-related hoaxes. Wingfield's take on The Slides: they were concocted by circlemakers John Lundberg, Rob Irving and Rod Dickinson, who had also (according to Wingfield) created the dummy alien dissected in Santilli's film. The accused, although reputedly flattered, denied the charge in 1995, but then one does, doesn't one? Wingfield found it significant that Lundberg, allegedly "the prime creator of this new 'Roswell' alien dummy", had declined to be interviewed on the new hoax, or admit to it, or to answer questions about it. He also figured that the 20th-anniversary date was deeply significant, as was the name of the claimed original owner of the slides – Hilda Ray.

Why? Because in 1995 Wingfield had dubbed the Santilli alien HILDA, an acronym for Hoax Irving Lundberg Dickinson Alien, and Santilli's first name was Ray. Wingfield's new one for the 'alien' of The Slides: MATILDA, for Maussan's Absurd Trick: Irving-Lundberg-Dickinson Alien. (Wingfield seemed not to know that Rod Dickinson, these days a 'respectable' academic and artist, has had his mind on other things besides 'hoaxes' for at least a decade.) Worse yet, Lundberg and Irving had been in California on a commissioned circlemaking job in February 2013. Why this was a key to unmasking the perps, Wingfield didn't say, any more than he produced any other convincing reason for fingering Circlemakers.org for the job. (<http://tinyurl.com/plqgju>)

HILDA is a nickname that stuck in the minds of few, possibly because the hard work in digging out the actual maker of the Santilli alien, one Spyros Melaris, was long since done by Philip Mantle (see: <http://tinyurl.com/p3vjxl1>) – but Wingfield seems blissfully unaware of that.

From wild denunciation to staunch support: the *Daily Mirror* reported the general disappointment with the main event in Mexico City – or as they quirkily put it: "UFO fans left heartbroken by Area 51 'alien' photo unveiling". They garnered a quote from former policeman Gary Heseltine, now editor of the online *UFO Truth Magazine*: "I know many of the people who were involved," he said. "They wouldn't risk their reputation by appearing at this event if the photos weren't genuine." His I-know-what-I-saw moment: "From my background as a policeman, I know what evidence is. These were compelling images of a being which was not human." And policemen, as we know, never make mistakes. (*Daily Mirror*, 6 May 2015: <http://tinyurl.com/yqgarwe>).

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

57 THE PHANTOM ANÆSTHETISTS, PART ONE

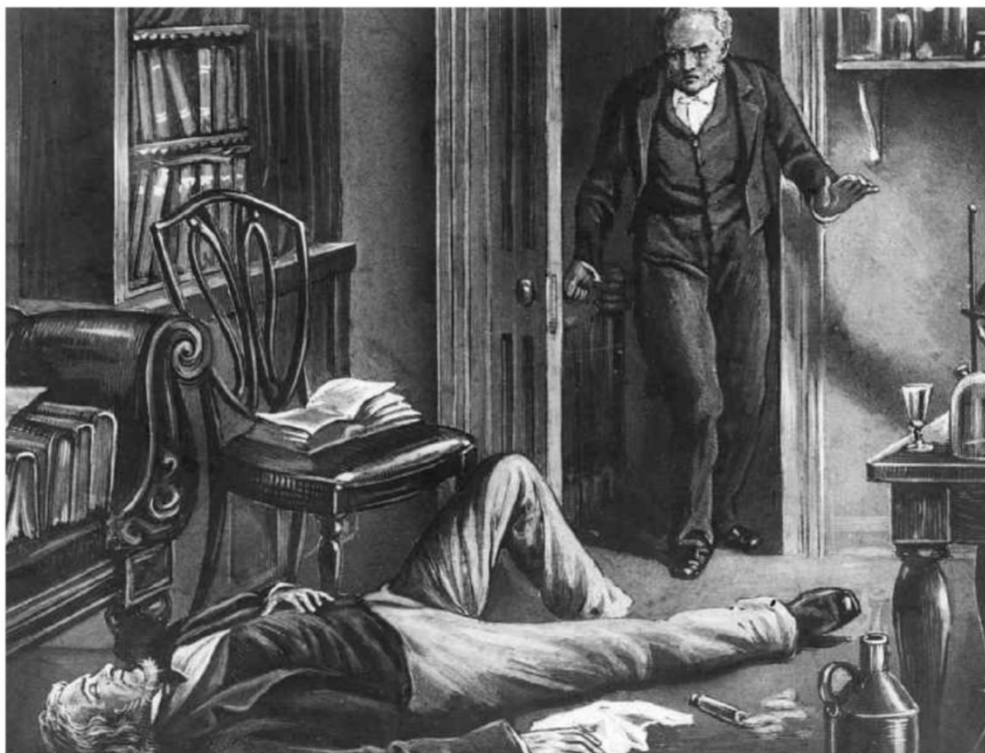
THEO PAIJMANS reveals that the 'Mad Gasser of Mattoon' was only one in a long line of mystery menaces

In 1847, Scottish obstetrician James Young Simpson (pictured at right, out for the count) used for the first time a colourless, sweet smelling liquid as an anæsthetic – it was called chloroform. In the same year, pioneer-dentist Francis Brodie Imlach was the first person to use it on a patient. Simpson is remembered as the man who discovered the anæsthetic properties of chloroform and successfully introduced it for general medical use and Imlach as the one who first employed it during a dental procedure. At that time, chloroform had already been in commercial production for 16 years.

There were also those who discovered a less savoury use for this novel compound. These 'pioneers' remain unknown due to the nature and application of their discovery. But it is with them that we find the origin of the 'mad gasser' – that shadowy entity that creeps into houses and sends entire families into temporary oblivion by means of a mysterious substance.

This tradition is a long one. As early as 1855 a burglar entered the house of a Mr John Lamb in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and succeeded in administering chloroform to Lamb and his wife while they were asleep. Taking with him some jewellery and \$40 that the couple had stashed under their pillow, the assailant left a bottle of chloroform in the room, which bore on it the label of a druggist elsewhere in the city. High Constable Scott was able to trace the burglar with the help of the druggist, who could account for all the chloroform he had sold. The information led to one Mr Shaw, who, when he was arrested, was found to be carrying with him a small bottle of chloroform.¹

In both America and Europe the more sinister use of the novel compound spread widely. It heralded the rise of what the newspapers of the day variously



HUTTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

As early as 1855, a burglar entered the house of a Mr John Lamb in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and administered chloroform to Lamb and his wife

called the chloroform thief, scoundrel, prowler or burglar. In 1876, some ambitious burglars broke into a drugstore in the town of Osborn, Missouri, and stole a bottle of chloroform with which they allegedly were able to drug "the whole town. They went through both hotels, all the stores and many private residences. They secured several thousand dollars and escaped."² The chloroform burglar of Long Island wasn't so lucky; on a January night in 1886, he sneaked into the residence of William Arnold in Bayport. "The intruder unlocked the door of a room in which Mrs Arnold was sleeping with her little girl, and chloroform was administered to

the lady. The burglar passed into another room where Mrs Eliza Wicks, mother of Mrs Arnold, was sleeping, and Mrs Wicks was also chloroformed. Mr Arnold was sleeping in a room on the second storey of the house. The thief did not know it." The noise of the burglar rummaging through the possessions of the family woke up the child, who started to cry. Mr Arnold also woke up, and the burglar made a hasty retreat through the window, falling from the stoop, raining down stolen coins around him as he descended. "He did not take time to gather up the money, and it was well that he did not, as Mr Arnold presently

appeared with a shotgun."³

That same year, EM Hulce, who lived just outside the city of Neenah, Wisconsin, had a much more harrowing experience. Two masked burglars broke into his house, chloroformed him and proceeded to ransack the house, "but Mr Hulce awoke and had a battle with them. In the struggle he pulled the mask off one of his assailants and identified him as a tramp who had hung around the house for a week past. Mr Hulce was alone in the house. The burglars... set fire to the house, burning it to the ground. Mr Hulce narrowly escaped burning to death, as he crawled out and laid down in the snow, dazed from the effects of the chloroform."⁴

As the use of chloroform in burglaries increased, new methods for its use were developed, as in the 1887 case of George Rick, who told the City Marshal of Dallas, Texas, that: "Burglars had attempted to chloroform Mrs Rick and

himself at a late hour last night. Mrs Rick awoke and gave the alarm, which had the effect of putting the scoundrels to flight. On her breast she found a piece of rag saturated with chloroform, and a mat on a 10-foot pole likewise saturated with chloroform stood near an open window.”⁵ The list of chloroform burglars is a very long one indeed, indicating a presence of this type of criminal activity till around 1917, when chloroform is replaced in the contemporary newspaper accounts by a ‘mystery gas’, although the town of Fullerton, California, suffered a ‘chloroform prowler’ in 1927: “A mysterious prowler who has thus far vainly attempted to overpower intended victims by chloroform fumes injected into their sleeping rooms today commanded the attention of Fullerton police...”⁶

Within this body of tales, though, lurks another category of darkly fortaean stories of which ultimately the fabled Mad Gasser of Mattoon, Illinois, (see FT48:16, 82:28, 131:32-38, 216:36-39) is a part.

The Mad Gasser of Mattoon (which was, coincidentally, the birthplace of fortaean writer Frank Edwards), may be the most famous of the lot; he – or it – is by no means unique, as the many other cases demonstrate. These dark tales concern reports of strange attacks by weird characters for unfathomable reasons that have nothing to do with simple monetary gain through nefarious ends. Now we meet masked prowlers, weird obsessions and strange fears. And this second category goes back a long way as well.

In 1875, the town of Bonham, Texas, (known in fortaean for a flying snake sighting in 1873 and a fireball in 1893) had a visit from a “scoundrel” who “entered the dwelling of one of our citizens and attempted to chloroform two young ladies, his daughters. It being very warm, one of the sisters restlessly turned over on the bed. In doing so she struck the

villain’s hand and immediately awoke with a scream. Her father, being in the next room, was soon to the rescue, but too late, as the robber, or whatever he was, had made his escape.”⁷ In 1887, Henry M Hurd had an equally strange tale to tell. He was to be married to Mrs Dora Washburne, but went “mysteriously missing” on the day of their wedding. When he turned up three days later he told how he was “chloroformed on the street by two men, and after being pushed into a close carriage lost consciousness. He remained in that state until this morning, when he found himself lying on the end of one of the lake piers. The only explanation he can offer is a theory that he was kidnapped by persons who mistook his identity.”⁸

In 1888, the town of Escanaba, Michigan, was rocked to its very foundations by the scandalous revelation of what a newspaper called the “devilish work” of a “medical monster”. A Dr WW Mulliken had been found guilty of chloroforming and assaulting girls aged between 10 and 15 over a period of 12 years. His victims may have numbered about 40. He was arrested, but inexplicably released on a \$1,000 bail, which he predictably jumped: “He is supposed to have gone to Canada.”⁹

With the sheer amount of chloroforming going on, things were bound to go from bad to worse. April 1885 saw the case of the murder by chloroforming of a Mr Preiler by a Mr Maxwell in room 144 of the Southern Hotel in St Louis. “After robbing the body, he packed it in a trunk, where it lay for two weeks. Since then the guests who have occupied the rooms have had strange experiences... Groans and frightful noises attended with the opening and closing of wardrobe doors, created a panic among guests. Finally the horror of 144 spread to such an extent that the room could not be assigned.”¹⁰

Then there is the Night Doctor scare experienced by

certain African American communities of South Carolina in 1889: “The Negroes of Clarendon, Williamsburg and Sumter counties have for several weeks past been in a state of fear and trembling. They claim that there is a white man, a doctor, who at will can make himself invisible, and who then approaches some unsuspecting darkey, and, having rendered him or her insensible with chloroform, proceeds to fill up a bucket with the victim’s blood, for the purpose of making medicine. After having drained the last drop of blood from the victim, the body is dumped into some secret place where it is impossible for any person to find it. The coloured women are so worked up over this phantom that they will not venture out at night, or in the daytime in any sequestered place...”¹¹

In 1893, a sensational burglary was committed in the town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, at the residence of tobacco dealer Walter Kendig. When his wife returned home she found the maid, Ella Harnish, “lying on the kitchen floor apparently unconscious, with a butcher knife and a bottle of chloroform by her side... she told a queer tale about a rough stranger entering the kitchen and threatening to cut off her hair if she screamed... he pulled a bottle from his pocket, knocked her down and she remembered no more.” The police did not believe the housemaid, as “there is evidence to show that no one entered the house after Mrs Kendig left it, and there was no smell of chloroform about.”¹²

Perhaps so, but some three decades before the ordeal of Ella Harnish, in 1857, women in the German city of Augsburg were very much in fear of a chloroform-using, hair-cutting ‘vampire’, as one English newspaper had it, calling it ‘A Dark Mystery’: “Great consternation exists at Augsburg. The Gazette of the town informs Europe of some vampire in human form, who, with aid of chloroform, stupefies

ladies at dusk in the streets, and cuts off their hair, without doing any further mischief. Latterly, this scalp hunter has been at his pursuit in the open daylight, and ladies go out attended by armed lackeys to obviate a rape of their locks. Dark mystery shrouds the affair, and the burgomeister is dumbfounded.”¹³

We learn more from the Augsburg newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung*: the mystery assailant had been terrorising the city for weeks in December that year. A reward was offered and everybody was jittery; scores of arrests were made, but each time the guilty party escaped the dragnets of justice. Descriptions of the sinister, hair-cutting ‘vampire’ varied: sometimes he was blond, on other occasions he had black hair. The newspaper further reported that “most of the girls were accosted during the day; were kept from crying for help by means of a small anaesthetic bottle”. The newspaper further remarked: “Be it as it may, it is remarkable that after the entire city is on the alert, and ladies don’t venture in the streets without companionship, the entire police force reinforced by military patrols haven’t been able to master the rascal... one hears almost every day about new attacks. A similar mischief had put our city in turmoil for a long period of time several years ago, and also at that time the suspicions that a person from the more affluent classes was involved couldn’t be confirmed to complete certainty.”¹⁴

The identity of the Augsburg chloroform vampire is one of those countless mysteries now lost in time. Was he a real person or the product of hysteria? That uncertainty and the use of a ‘small anaesthetic bottle’ earn him the dubious distinction of being the grandfather of the Mad Gasser of Mattoon, an equally uncertain and phantom-like figure who was also known as the ‘Anaesthetic Prowler’ or ‘Phantom anaesthetist’.

NOTES

1 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 30 Aug 1855.

2 ‘Recaptured-Burglary’, *Dubuque Herald*, Iowa, 8 Jan 1876.

3 ‘Chloroform. Used by a Bold Long island Burglar’, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 15 Jan 1886.

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5 Dots From Dallas’, *Galveston Daily News*, Texas, 23 Aug 1887.

6 ‘Ralph Ince Attacked

By drug Thrower’, *News-Palladium*, Benton Harbor, Michigan, 1 July 1927.

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8 ‘A Chicago Man’s Strange Story’, *St*

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9 ‘A Medical Monster. Shocking Revelations in a Town in Michigan. Dr Mulliken’s Devilish Work’, *Wisconsin State Register*, Portage, Wisconsin, 29 Dec 1888.

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12 ‘Bold Robberies & Attempts

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THE MORBACH MONSTER

Towards the end of the Cold War, some American servicemen stationed in rural Germany reported a terrifying encounter with a werewolf, and in the intervening years the story has only grown in the telling. **CRISPIN ANDREWS** travelled to the brooding fairytale forests of the Hunsrück in search of the truth about the Morbach Monster...

"If the candle goes out, the beast will return."

This, the story goes, was the warning given to three US security police officers who walked past a shrine in Wenigerath, a village on the outskirts of the German town of Wittlich, sometime in 1988. Had they stumbled upon a genuine lycanthropic legend come to life? Or was it just a tale dreamed up by bored Americans stationed in the country that gave the world, and Hollywood, the werewolf?

The Morbach Ammunition Storage Site where the three servicemen worked was set between the Hunsrück Mountains to the east and the Mosel Valley to the west. From 1955 to 1995 it was the largest ammunition depot of the US Air Force in the whole of Europe. It was also the perfect place for a werewolf, surrounded as it was by its woods and hills, and isolated farms and villages. There's even a spooky old hotel on the forest's edge and an even spookier mediaeval ruin called Castle Baldenau.

On that night back in 1988, however, it was the American base itself that was the scene of a confrontation torn straight from the pages of a Gary Brandner novel – if you believe the story, that is. Let's say we do, for the sake of argument...

THE INCIDENT

It must have begun as another boring and uneventful night for the three security officers. The Cold War was almost over, and the following year the Berlin Wall would come down. But even at height of the East-West conflict, from the 1960s to the 1980s, the nearest a Russian got to these

THE SECURITY GUARDS STARED INTO THE EYES OF A HUGE, WOLF-LIKE CREATURE

westernmost parts of what was then West Germany was when the local *supermarkt* received its weekly shipment of vodka.

A base has got to have security, though. So, every night, off the security policemen marched, round the perimeter fence and through the dark forest that enveloped it; with nothing better to do than brag about their exploits with the local *frauleins* and spook each other with scary stories about ghosts, ghouls, and, of course, werewolves.

On this night, then, when the three guards

attended a disturbance at the western section of the perimeter fence, they must have welcomed the chance for action, even if it amounted to nothing more than chasing off a group of curious teenagers or freeing another wild boar from the mesh fence.

Arriving at the scene of the alarm, one of the men noticed movement – from inside the fence. The security officer shone his light straight at the spot, and immediately wished he hadn't.

It wasn't a Commie paratrooper brandishing a Kalashnikov that stood before him. Nor had a gang of Baader-Meinhoff wannabees smoked too much dope and turned up at the base hoping to abduct Ronald Reagan. There was no sign of any tree-hugging hippie demonstrators, and not a single Iranian terrorist in sight. No. What stood before these security officers (if you believe the story of course) was something far worse...

For a moment it was just a dark shape. Animal, definitely – maybe a deer or a stray dog. Suddenly, the creature wheeled round, snarled, and then, amazingly, reared up on its hind legs. For a few long seconds the awestruck security guards stared into the eyes of a huge wolf-like creature. Before they could react, the beast, now on two legs, took a few giant steps and, with a single leap, cleared the fence, before disappearing into the forest on all fours.

The story doesn't end there. Soon, reinforcements arrived, with tracker dogs. But when the dogs picked up the creature's



LEFT: The stretch of the Morbach perimeter fence where the encounter is alleged to have taken place.





ABOVE: Service personnel at the Morbach Ammunition Storage Site photographed in the 1970s.

scent, the animals did a Scooby Doo. They panicked and shied away from the trail. The security officers weren't that bothered by their dog's disobedience, though. They were in no particular hurry to chase after a werewolf.

This then, is the story of the Morbach Monster. It was first made public by DL Ashlimann, an American folklorist who runs a website of folktales and legends out of the University of Pittsburgh. Ashlimann claims a man stationed at Hahn Air Base, now Frankfurt-Hahn airport, contacted him with the story in 1997. The witness recounted the events just as I have done above. "There have always been 'ghost' stories dreamed up by bored security policemen," says Ashlimann, "but this is one I have heard over and over again."

A year later, a man claiming to be one of the security police who saw the werewolf also contacted Ashlimann. According to Ashlimann, the second man said: "I was stationed at Hahn Air Base from May 1986 to August 1989 as a security policeman, and it was my group that witnessed the Morbach werewolf. Whoever told you the story about the monster that you put on your website had very accurate information. The creature that we saw was definitely an animal and definitely dog or wolf like. It was about seven to eight feet [2.1-2.4m] tall, and it jumped a 12ft [3.7m] security fence after taking three long, leaping steps."

Ashlimann's first contact also hinted that the story had a historical source: "Supposedly Wittlich is the last town where a werewolf was killed. There is a shrine just outside of town where a candle always burns. Legend has it that if the candle ever goes out the werewolf will return."

THE WITTLICH WEREWOLF

Wittlich, a small town 24 miles (39km) east of Trier, is best known for its annual pig roast festival, and a local legend not unlike that of the Three Little Pigs. The town, under siege from an invading enemy, was burnt to the ground, supposedly after a hungry pig ate a carrot that was being used as a bolt across the castle gates. Thanks to the thoughtless

SUPPOSEDLY, WITTLICH IS THE LAST TOWN WHERE A WEREWOLF WAS KILLED...



porker, the enemy didn't even need to huff and puff to blow this particular door down. Every August since then, locals roast and eat as many pigs as they can get their hands on at the *Säubrennerkirmes* ("Sow Burner Fair").

The historical Wittlich werewolf story goes like this. As Napoleon's European campaign raged, Thomas Johannes Baptist Schwytzer, a deserter from the Imperial Army, is said to have travelled through Wittlich on his way home to Alsace. During his stay, the cruel Schwytzer murdered a farmer. Cursed by the man's wife, the murderer took to the forest as a wolf, subsequently killing men and beasts alike with savage rage.

After several weeks, villagers finally cornered and killed the werewolf Schwytzer, burying him at a crossroads several miles from Wittlich. Here, they erected a shrine and lit a candle of protection. According to the tale, if the candle should ever go out, Schwytzer would be set free to wreak his deadly revenge.

The Wittlich werewolf story has appeared in a number of books: Nigel Suckling's



ABOVE: Wittlich, undone by a thoughtless porker (commemorated in a sculpture) and once home to a werewolf.

WILLY HORSCH



ABOVE: Researcher Matthias Burgard stands by the Morbach perimeter fence today. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Abandoned buildings at the Morbach base (top) and an aerial view of Hahn Air Base, a frontline NATO facility in Germany throughout the Cold War and home to US servicemen from 1952 to 1993. **BELOW:** Perfect werewolf habitat in the area.

Werewolves (2006), Jamie Hall's *Half Human, Half Animal* (2003) and Linda Godfrey's *Hunting the American Werewolf* (2006). It has even made a musical appearance in US thrash metal band Usurper's song 'Return of the Werewolf', which begins 'Wittlich! Deutschland! Last Werewolf Slayed!' The song then recounts the return of the cursed Schwytzer, who "thinks as a man but walks as a wolf", and whose "spirit haunts the nocturnal landscape".

Morbach Monster stories, poems and blogs have appeared on werewolf fan sites and other Internet forums. The now defunct local American football team even took the name of the 'Morbach Monsters'.

A few years back, Matthias Burgard, a lecturer in cultural anthropology at the University of Mainz, conducted a detailed study of the Morbach and Wittlich cases. In 2008, he published a book, *Das Monster Von Morbach*. While researching the tales, Burgard, who grew up in Wittlich, found some interesting new witnesses.

One, who claimed to be a Chief of Flight Security at Hahn Air Base, told Burgard: "A couple of my long-timers who were there since about 1982 or 83 swore they saw the werewolf". A security policeman who lived there from 1989 to 1991 insists that people on the base believed the tale. "We called the monster MO-MO," says another. "It could have been a large dog, possibly, but many times we heard movements deep in the woods, and loud yowling. The whole place was just damn strange at night."

Burgard was also informed of another occasion on which two different security police claimed to have seen a strange animal in the undergrowth close to the fence. The creature was too quick for them (they always are), and left no footprints

(they never do) on the pine needle carpet. "The animal was very furry and between two and four foot [60-120cm] high," one of the security officers told him. An airman stationed at Hahn claims to have been stalked, whilst walking his dogs, by an unseen beast that let out a wolf-like howl.

Another ex-Hahn serviceman offers a more down-to-earth explanation: "If you have never seen a German wild boar, they look like a four-foot-tall brazil nut with tusks and legs. They are dark brown and stinky and hairy and big and could easily be mistaken for some sort of supernatural beast." A former comrade-in-arms disagrees, though: "There were wild hogs in the area," he maintains, "but I grew up on a farm in

the USA and this was no hog."

Many subsequent online posts are obviously the work of fakers and fantasists, jumping on the bandwagon to add colour to the story. But one thing seems clear: whether or not there was a werewolf running about the Hunsrück Mountains, the US service personnel working there had certainly heard the tale. "It was always fun to scare the new guys with stories of the werewolf, and then make them do a security check of the perimeter on foot," says one former Hahn security officer. Another adds: "One of our K-9s was this big black bouvier with bloodshot eyes. We would always send that dog's handler to meet the new guys, with his dog."





ABOVE: American horror films like the 1941 *The Wolfman* helped cement a modern myth of the werewolf, while the 1980s saw a major new cycle of werewolf movies. BELOW: Wild boar roam the forests around Morbach – could they be the culprits? BOTTOM: The Werewolf of Neuses, a piece of lycanthropic lore from 17th century Germany.

NAZIS AND WOLFSHEADS

Burgard thinks that the Morbach Monster story was probably dreamed up by servicemen who'd overdosed on a cocktail of boredom, the Brothers Grimm and Lon Chaney Jr. "Locals (in and around Morbach) know nothing about the monster story," he says. He believes that any legend must be seen in context: "Long before the 1980s, Germans stopped believing werewolves could be real, thinking more about witches and ghosts for their scary stories".

For American soldiers, however, werewolf culture was relatively new. Hollywood started making werewolf films in 1913; it's first effort, a silent film called *The Werewolf*, reportedly flopped because people took one look at the real wolf in the starring role and thought it was cute. Subsequent producers searched for a new leading monster. And so, over the next 40 years, the Wolfman was born. "Before Hollywood, werewolves were people who turned into big wolves which then ate other people," Burgard explains. Then, thanks to the movies, elements of vampirism, a curse passed on through biting, and the influence of the full Moon, were added to the increasingly popular werewolf mythos. "They [Hollywood producers] looked at circus freaks and vampires, and they decided that is how our werewolves must be," he concludes.

Did American servicemen come to Germany after the war convinced that the country was full of werewolves? If they'd been stationed in Romania, would the monster legend have instead been about a vampire? Or in Norway, a troll?

Perhaps other factors were at play in Morbach. In the final year of WWII and during the initial stages of Germany's occupation by allied forces, plainclothes Nazi soldiers used guerrilla tactics against

THE AREA IS FULL OF SHRINES LIKE THE ONE DESCRIBED IN THE WEREWOLF STORY



allied forces. These small groups attacked the allies by surprise, at night, often from within forests and other concealed positions. The Nazis called them *Werewolf* troops.

Operation *Werewolf* didn't disrupt allied plans. But with Hitler's 'Fight to the Death' speech still in his enemies' minds, the *Werewolf* forces created a climate of fear for years. It's not hard to imagine how such a climate might feed superstition and fear among the occupying forces that real werewolves lived in the darkest corners of the vast forests that covered parts of Germany. Indeed, one of Burgard's American witnesses claims that a former Nazi soldier was still living in the Hunsrück forests in 1988.

As with all good legends, there are some elements of truth floating around in the Morbach case. The area around Wittlich really is full of shrines like the one described in the story. They're dotted quite randomly around the countryside: by streams, along roadsides and, in some cases, jutting from the edge of woods and hillsides. To the werewolf devotee it would all look very sinister, but often these shrines do nothing

TIMM SCHAMBERGER / AFP / GETTY IMAGES



CRISPIN ANDREWS

ABOVE: Local 'wolveshead' Johannes Buckler, or Schinderhannes, after whom this Morbach hotel is named. BELOW: Interior of the roadside shrine at Rapperath.

more than greet visitors to a town or village, while others bid travellers a safe farewell. Many of the shrines do have candles inside. Few, if any, remain lit for very long. This is thanks to wind, rain, damp, and dodgy candlewicks, though – not supernatural forces.

According to Burgard many of these shrines are centuries old. "Some are so old, people have forgotten why they are there," he says. "Maybe to protect people from evil spirits, as a mark of religious or political respect. Some have symbols, hammers, knives, and other tools, as if to honour some craftsman."

Historically, this part of Germany was always Catholic. Protestants and Jews lived here in smaller numbers, though, and in such a place rivalries, jealousies and resentments would have been common. For many centuries in parts of Europe, this one included, the term 'werewolf' was used as an insult – a slur on a person considered different from, or beneath, oneself. "Maybe local Catholic leaders erected the shrines to protect other Catholics from Protestant and Jewish werewolves," Burgard muses.

In 1806, around the time the werewolf Schywtzer was supposedly slain, people from the village of Rapperath, a mile or so from Morbach, erected a shrine to protect their livestock against an outbreak of pestilence that had killed many farm animals earlier in the year. As in many parts of rural Germany, religious traditions are still strong here, and every year locals take part in a ceremonial march through the village to the shrine. They hold candles, to ensure divine protection from any new misfortune.

At the turn of the 19th century, a real-life Johannes did live in the surrounding woods. Johannes Buckler, or *Schinderhannes*, as the infamous Rhenish outlaw was popularly known, caused the occupying Napoleonic



CRISPIN ANDREWS

forces a good deal of trouble, before his execution in 1803.

For the occupied people, *Schinderhannes* was a hero. He flouted the law, robbing the French and their lackeys on both sides of the Rhine. Today, in Morbach town centre, there's a restaurant and hotel named after Germany's answer to Dick Turpin, while the insignia on a nearby bakery looks just like the werewolf the American servicemen claim to have seen.

Werewolves and outlaws have a long association. The Common Law of England, installed in the 11th century, not long after the Norman Conquest, issued a Writ of Outlawry: *Caput gerat lupinum*. "Let his be a wolf's head".

Deprived of all legal rights, an outlaw could be killed on sight as if he were a wild animal. Thrown out of his village or town, he would be forced to live in the woods and

forests. All over Europe, criminals – real or imagined – fled justice in this way. Without clothes, many would have worn the skins of the animals they hunted. In the dark, an attack by an outlaw wearing a wolf-skin could easily be mistaken for a wolf attack. A traveller killed by outlaws and subsequently scavenged by wolves, lynx, or even foxes or martens, would have been evidence enough for locals that a werewolf lurked amongst them.

In Norse society, too, an outlaw, was known as a *vagr*, and a rogue wolf that slaughtered many members of a flock but ate little of the kill, a *vargulf*. In Old English the rogue wolf was called *warg*, a term later used by JRR Tolkien as the name of the fictional wolf-like creatures his Orcs used as steeds. In Proto-Germanic, the forerunner of all modern Germanic languages including English, *wargaz* meant 'strangler' and hence



ABOVE: The old Morbach base is now the Energielandschaft Morbach, complete with its own friendly werewolf mascot (below).

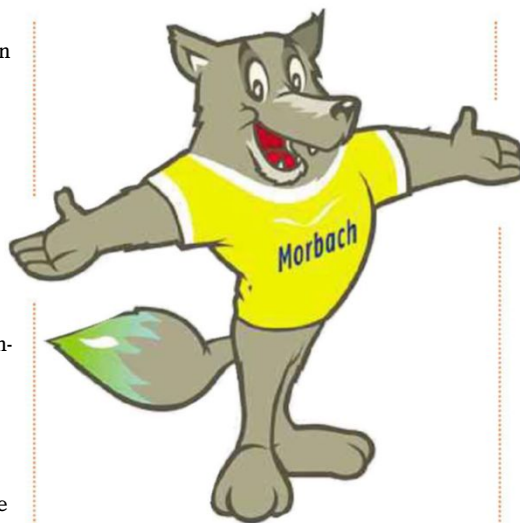
evildoer, criminal and outcast. The word 'werewolf' or 'man-wolf' was first recorded in Old English during the 11th century. It too was sometimes used to refer to outlaws.

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN GERMANY

So, take some local ingredients – an outlaw, a few shrines and an outbreak of pestilence – add some imagination, a little paranoia, and a hint of narcissism on the part of some of the storytellers, and you're well on the way to creating a modern-day werewolf legend.

After all, they seemed to be in the cultural air at the time. Werewolf films enjoyed an unexpected resurgence on the big screen during the 1980s: *The Howling* (1981; followed by four sequels through the decade), *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Wolfen* (1981), *The Company of Wolves* (1984), *Silver Bullet* (1985), *Teen Wolf in Paris* was in cinemas in 1997, the very year that the Morbach story seems first to have surfaced. Around the same time in the late 1980s as the supposed Morbach encounter took place, reports of upright, walking werewolves were starting to emerge elsewhere – for instance, in local newspapers in Wisconsin. The so-called Beast of Bray Road would go on to appear in national newspapers and become a major celebrity in parts of the USA (see pp38-41).

There's what might be politely described as artistic license at work in the Morbach story, too. Like all good legends, it has been spiced up to make it both scarier and more



believable, and further tweaked to boost the egos of the people doing the tweaking. I've stood by the fence that the werewolf supposedly jumped over. It isn't 12ft (3.7m) high, more like seven (2.1m).

But then, a world full of werewolves, witches and vampires is a more exciting place than one in which only boar, deer and maybe a few dope fiends roam the woods at night. How exciting, then, to be one of those who has seen, or better still, vanquished the Morbach Monster. To convince others that the encounter was real is also to convince them of what an exciting, unique and attractive individual you must be; hiding behind Internet anonymity, you can, for a while, be a legend in your own chatroom.

Matthias Burgard says that even today

American holidaymakers come to Morbach to hunt the werewolf. One man, whom Burgard spoke to while researching his book, phoned the author a few months later. He'd come all the way to Germany from the USA and he was very excited.

"Mr Burgard," the man told Matthias, ominously. "I am in Morbach. The candle is out and the werewolf is here!"

Once the legend took hold, perhaps it really did create a climate in which American servicemen genuinely feared encounters with the Morbach Monster. "People who are used to towns and cities see the wilderness and are afraid," says Burgard. And once fear sets in, people will imagine all manner of beasts lurking in the shadows. "The forest, particularly at night, is not a place for humans; or at least that's what some people think," he adds.

The old Morbach munitions base is an energy park these days. On the site is a museum devoted to its previous life in the Cold War, including a small section about the Morbach Monster. The *Energielandschaft Morbach* even has its own mascot: a happy, smiling, cartoon werewolf called Windfried. **FT**

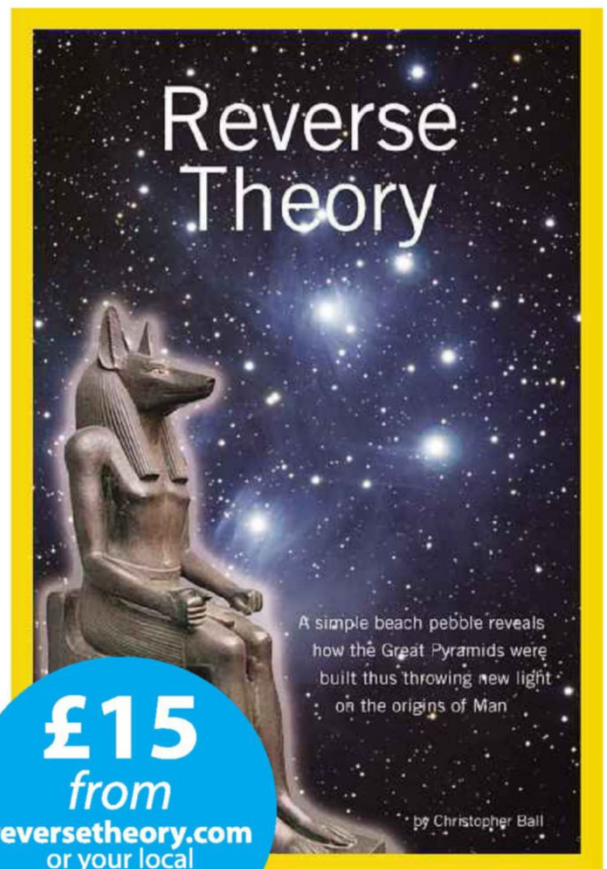
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



CRISPIN ANDREWS is a freelance writer. He loves cricket, werewolves and Sherlock Holmes, but doesn't watch reality TV and thinks everyone should know that Alan B'stard is alive, well, and secretly running the country from a bunker underneath 10 Downing Street.

Spirit vs Science

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Closer inspection of the humble beach pebble could spell disaster for the theory of evolution. The one fact that gives geology its timetable is the erosion process 'How long did it take that pebbled beach to look like that sandy beach' From solid rock to boulders, boulders to pebbles and from pebbles to sand. Our great scholars collectively agreed that to form all the sand in the world would take a thousand million years (an aeon) and confirmed "This Planet Must Be Old"

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THE ACCIDENTAL WEREWOLF CHRONICLER

In the winter of 1991, the first stories of a werewolf stalking the area around Elkhorn, Wisconsin, reached the local newspaper and the life of one staffer was changed forever.

TEA KRULOS meets Linda S Godfrey, recorder of America's modern manwolves.

Wisconsin author Linda S Godfrey didn't set out to become a leading expert on the Manwolf phenomenon; she just kind of fell into it during the cold winter of 1991.

"I call myself the accidental werewolf chronicler because it was nothing that I thought of in my previous life as a career I might someday have," Godfrey told me. She lived in the "quiet, conservative community" of Elkhorn with her husband and children. In the early 1990s she got a staff job at the small Walworth County newspaper the *Week*. Her original aim was to be an editorial cartoonist. She got her foot in the door at the paper when the editors agreed to run her cartoons.

"As much as I liked it," she said, "I was finding it hard to be outraged by everything, which you need to do to draw an editorial cartoon every day. You need a really strong point of view, and I can usually see both sides of an issue." She next tried to develop a concept for a daily comic strip, but found a career in the comics business can be almost as difficult as trying to find a cryptid – which is what Godfrey found herself doing next.

Like the staff of many small publications, Godfrey began wearing many hats and was soon using the skills she learned in journalism class to report news. One day, she received a strange tip. "Someone told me that people around Elkhorn were reporting seeing something that reminded them of a werewolf on Bray Road, which is a two-mile stretch of country road just outside of town. So, just for fun, I checked into it. I found out a lot of people were talking about it, and I discovered our county animal control officer had a file folder in his office that was marked 'Werewolf'. That fact made it news."

Godfrey tracked down some of the people who had supposedly witnessed the creature and began to piece together a frightening mystery. "[The witnesses] didn't strike me as jokers or liars. They seemed very sincere



LEFT: Linda Godfrey's original artist's impression of the 'Beast of Bray Road' as it appeared in local newspaper the *Week* in 1991.

probably cause some chuckles and be gone, but in two weeks it became national news". The two-page spread was just the first of hundreds of pages she would end up writing on the topic.

THE BEAST OF BRAY ROAD

The Beast of Bray Road, as it had come to be known, drew attention from across the country. News vans rolled through Elkhorn to get reaction quotes from citizens and to shoot footage of Bray Road. As I would soon see when I went to visit Godfrey in Elkhorn, the country lane isn't quite the creepy Transylvanian forest people hope for but a tame stretch of subdivisions and cornfields.

Elkhorn revelled in its newfound celebrity monster as werewolf fever hit the town. A local bakery peddled "werewolf cookies". A tavern offered "silver bullet specials". The *Week* produced a T-shirt featuring an illustration of the beast by Godfrey that quickly sold out. A mayoral

candidate even staged a publicity photo, claiming he had been endorsed by the cryptid.

All of this had the makings of a local legend, a small-town Wisconsin answer to Point Pleasant's Mothman. Soon, though, Godfrey had another surprise: she found that similar reports of the creature were coming her way – not just from the Elkhorn area, but from around the world.

"From that point on I sort of became the person people started sending their reports to and that media came to. As soon as the story appeared, I started getting phone calls and letters from all over." Godfrey continues to get these reports via e-mails, phone calls, and letters. She found that a similar creature was already legendary in Michigan, where it is commonly called the Dogman. She began researching the

"I DISCOVERED OUR COUNTY ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER HAD A FILE MARKED WEREWOLF"

and frightened over what they experienced," Godfrey recalled. One of them even reported that they had seen the werewolf squatting by the side of the road munching on some roadkill.

Godfrey's article ran in the *Week* on 31 December 1991. "We thought it would



ABOVE LEFT: Linda Godfrey, whose career took an unexpected turn when she became a chronicler of the USA's were-creatures in books like *Real Wolfmen* (below). ABOVE RIGHT: The town of Elkhorn, Walworth County: an everyday Wisconsin town that found itself at the centre of a rash of Manwolf sightings.

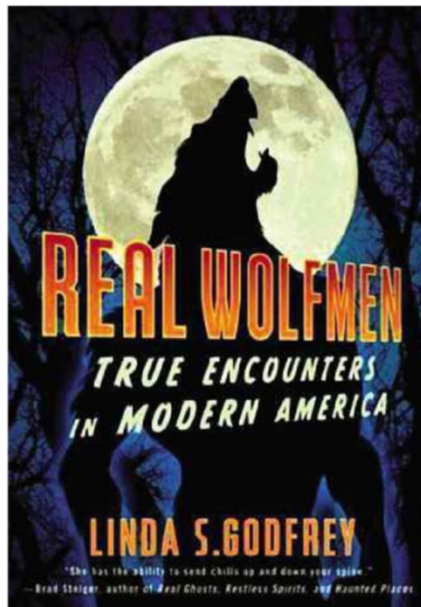
Algonquin legends of the Wendigo, a half-human beast associated with cannibalism that purportedly stalks the woods of the Midwest and Atlantic coast. Terrified and confused people have sent her reports from as far away as Germany.

Digging through a stack of recent e-mail correspondence she had printed off, she told me of a report sent earlier in the year from a hunter in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. Godfrey said he reported he was hunting for wild boar and deer when he and his dog stumbled on a seven-foot-tall Wolfman. “[He said] it was covered in black fur with some greyish stripes here and there. He backed up slowly and felt like it was following him. He felt threatened and fired on it, and it stumbled off into the brush.”

Godfrey began compiling all of this incoming information and her research into book format. *The Beast of Bray Road: Tailing Wisconsin's Werewolf* was her first book on the topic and was published in 2003. She began to record reports of other mystery animals – Bigfoot, Thunderbirds, Lizard Men, Lake Monsters – and she profiled these in books like *Weird Michigan* (2006) and *Monsters of Wisconsin* (2011). Godfrey's magnum opus on the Manwolf phenomenon is a collection of reports on sightings published in 2012 and entitled *Real Wolfmen: True Encounters in Modern America*. Despite the title, Godfrey prefers to call the creature a ‘Manwolf’, because unlike the Hollywood werewolves we are all familiar with, the creatures in the book aren't humans who turn into wolves under a full Moon.

One of the most hair-raising stories in her recent book is from a chapter titled “Manwolf Multiples,” in which she tells the story of a terrified couple from Palmyra, Maine, who claim that they were trapped in their home by a pack of Manwolves in 2007.

“They were sitting on their front porch at night and found themselves being stalked in their own yard by a total of five upright,



wolf-like creatures, who were walking on their hind legs and flanking them. They were about seven feet [2.1m] tall, based on comparison to a door they passed by. They held them hostage in their house all night. The man couldn't get to his guns because they were locked in an outer building. They called 911, who told them to call a game warden. They could see the creatures lurking and prowling around their house.”

With no nearby neighbours and fearing for relatives' safety, the couple braved the night until the creatures vanished in the early morning. “It's one of the longest contacts, with two credible witnesses who saw the same thing,” Godfrey noted.

SKINWALKERS

According to the Navajo (or Diné people) creation story (*Diné Bahane'*), the first monster hunters were twin brothers named Naayéé' neizghání (the Monster Slayer)

and Tó bájísh chíní (Child of Water). In the brothers' world at the beginning of time, the land was overrun with the *Naayéé'*, a group of gruesome monsters that devoured the brothers' people.

After disobeying their mother, the brothers caught the attention of Yé'itsoh (Big Giant) and thus sought out their father, Jóhonaa'éeí (the Sun) who provided them with the proper weapons to slay the giant. Wanting to rid the land of the bloodthirsty *Naayéé'*, the brothers systematically used their brains and brawn to ambush Déélgééd (the Horned Monster) and Tsé dah hódziiltáíí (Monster Who Kicks People Off Cliffs), among others. After slaying these monsters and leaving their decapitated heads and hides spread across the desert, the brothers made the world a safer place for its new occupants, the Earth Surface People.

“All of these things happened a long, long time ago, it is said,” according to the *Diné Bahane'*.

But there are some who say the strange and the sinister still lurk in the Navajo Nation.

Crypto Four Corners (C4C) is a group based in Teec Nos Pos, inside the Navajo Nation. This, according to one of the group's founders, JC Johnson, is apparently a fortune vortex. Johnson told me that his group has tried to track down a variety of cryptids in the Four Corners region of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. These include (but aren't limited to) Sasquatch, Thunderbirds, Small People 3ft (90cm)-tall humanoids in traditional Diné dress, similar to Leprechauns, and something they dub the “Night Stalker,” a flying, clawed monster that a New Mexico family claimed was terrorising them.

And just like Linda Godfrey, they've investigated several reports of the Manwolf, or as Johnson prefers to call it, the Dogman. In Navajo Nation, though, Johnson says



LINDA GODFREY

ABOVE: Linda Godfrey, on a winter hike through the Kettle Moraine State Forest, Wisconsin, where there have been sightings of upright wolf-like creatures for decades. **BELOW:** The author visits the infamous Bray Road – but has to provide his own Beast. **OPPOSITE:** An American Manwolf drawn by Linda Godfrey for her book *American Monsters*.

reports of Dogman can be confused with the *ye naaldlooshii* or Skinwalkers, which, according to Navajo beliefs, are evil witches who have the ability to shape-shift into animals. They can turn into any animal, but a common form is a coyote or wolf. It's said if you look at their eyes, you'll be placed under a powerful form of mind control.

Johnson, a burly outdoorsman, founded C4C along with cryptid investigator David Ortiz and Diné chief Leonard Dan. They've investigated Skinwalker encounters, including one in a cave-dotted gorge locals have nicknamed Skinwalker Canyon. C4C is composed of an eclectic line-up of investigators, "half Navajo Diné," according to Johnson. With their camo fatigues, generous supply of firearms, and a few heavily tattooed members, C4C looks like a zombie apocalypse survival team straight out of *The Walking Dead*. The team's eldest member, "researcher/tracker" Chief Dan, says that he first heard of the Skinwalkers from his grandparents. He says they were at one point helpful to the Diné people, spying on Spanish conquistadors, but eventually chose to take an evil path.

Johnson said in an interview that in order to become a Skinwalker, you must "sacrifice a loved one, sibling, child, someone close to you." You then "bring in the body to the group, that they might practise necrophilia, and then feast on some of the body parts. Later they will take some of the organs and make powders and potions." Skinwalker apprenticeship then begins.

"THEY COULD BE SITTING NEXT TO YOU IN SUNDAY SCHOOL AT 9AM AND AT 9PM TAKE THE FORM OF A WOLF"

The main difference between a Skinwalker and a Dogman, Johnson told me, is that a Skinwalker appears to be a normal person most of the time: "They could be sitting next to you in Sunday school at 9am, and at 9pm they take the form of a wolf". Dogman, on the other hand, is a cryptid stuck in humanoid-wolf form permanently.

BREAKFAST AT VASILI'S

Months after my phone interview with Linda Godfrey, I took a trip out to Elkhorn on 12 April 2014 with my photographer friend Lacy Landre. We met up with Godfrey at Vasili's Cafe, a classic diner in



LACY LANDRE

downtown Elkhorn. The plan was to have breakfast, and then Lacy and I would bravely check out the legendary Bray Road for ourselves.

"This is my go-to place," Godfrey told us after we arrived. Settling into a booth near the window, Godfrey told us about her newest book – *American Monsters: A History of Monster Lore, Legends, and Sightings in America* – which details reports she's collected of various cryptids across the country. She has also recently taken a stab at fiction, writing a fantasy novel titled *God Johnson: The Unforgiven Diary of the Disciple of a Lesser God*. Talk then turned back to Bray Road.

"It's not isolated. You're going to drive down it and be like, Why would a monster be on this road?" she warned us.

Although the major hoopla at Bray Road happened between 1991 and 1992, sightings of the cryptid in the Elkhorn area still filter through to Godfrey. She documented a case from October 2008, from a middle-aged couple who saw it run in front of their car on Bray Road and jump a guardrail.

"They said they could see the fur flowing as it ran past," she said.

And as the waitress delivered omelettes and refilled our coffee mugs, Godfrey informed us of a sighting just a couple months before our arrival in Elkhorn. "There was one in February. It wasn't on Bray Road, but it was in the vicinity," she told us cautiously.

"Can you tell us about it?" I asked.

"Um... I can't tell you a lot about it. The person is really antsy about remaining anonymous and is afraid his neighbours will figure it out. But the gist of it was he was working in his outbuildings, like at 3am in February, when it was really cold, and he heard some of his animals acting weird, making noises; so he looked out in his field and there was a bipedal, running, brown, shaggy-furred thing with a muzzle and ears, hunched over but running on its hind feet, chasing a coyote. He chased it off into a field."

She added, "It's a pretty reliable source."

A SHORT TRIP DOWN BRAY ROAD

"This way is a little simpler, actually. Turn left, then turn right, and you can take Court Street, which is the next street up – that'll take you to Highway 11, and that takes you all the way to Bray Road," Godfrey told us as we reviewed directions to get to the scene of the story. She added that most of the sightings had been at the far ends of the road, near the intersections of Bray Road and Hospital Road and County NN. We headed out.

It was a cold April, and Wisconsin was still in hibernation from a long winter. The sky was overcast and grey, a fresh rain reflecting off the narrow two-lane country road. The trees were bare as we cruised slowly down



Bray Road, passing barns and cornfields shorn close to the frozen ground. Ravens hopped around, foraging for food. An occasional house, a small patch of trees. As Godfrey said, it hardly resembled a scene from a horror movie, just another stretch of country road, the same type of scenery that stretches across hundreds of miles of the Midwest. "Not much to it," I said to Lacy, shrugging, and we headed home.

MYSTERY-MONGERING?

What is this "upright canine creature" supposed to be? Godfrey has heard theories ranging from unknown or evolved animals to black magic to extraterrestrial visitors. She once got a phone call from Scotland from a man who explained to her his theory that they were werewolves from the fourth dimension. There's even been some debate on the subject amongst cryptozoologists, especially when Bigfooters got wind of the story and determined the cryptid was invading their turf.

"[Some Bigfooters] are very possessive, very adamant about their own theories: 'I'm totally right and you're totally wrong.' They were calling it the Snouted Bigfoot, because everything had to be a Bigfoot," Godfrey told us, laughing. "If you went to Africa and were studying chimpanzees and then you saw a hyena, would you call that a snouted chimpanzee?"

When I asked sceptic Ben Radford about the Beast of Bray Road, he told me he believes it not to be a Manwolf or a Snouted Bigfoot, but a hodgepodge of

'mystery-mongering'.

"For a lot of these cryptozoology types, a good story is better than the truth, and they just throw all these theories out there, hoping that something sticks," he said, waving his hands at the webcam during our interview. "And it could be ghosts, it could be aliens, it could be fucking Dracula, here's a dozen theories, some I pulled out of my ass! There's no serious investigation or journalism. It's mystery-mongering, and I find it distasteful."

"All these reports get force-fitted into this new story – that there's werewolves running around Bray Road, which is fine, except..." Radford leaned into the webcam, "there is no good evidence for werewolves!" He laughed.

Evidence for the Beast is indeed limited to the anecdotal. Photos and video have all turned out to be faked.

Godfrey recalls in one of her books that she met a woman who claimed she had a Manwolf scat sample.

It was analysed and determined to come from a raccoon.

Godfrey's stance on the Beast of Bray Road is similar to that of Mothman promoter Jeff Wamsley or cryptozoologist Lyle Blackburn and his examination of the Fouke Monster. She told me she thought people had been seeing *something*, but she couldn't say what, and viewed herself primarily as a documenter of the Manwolf mystery.

"I don't know whether the mystery can ever be solved," Godfrey admitted. "Just when I think I have it pinned down to one idea or another, I'll get a slew of reports that show something else. I just feel I have become the inadvertent keeper of the lore and reports, and I hope that by recording these things that people send me, we'll be able to get a database that people can refer to and they can make up their minds one way or the other." **FT**



Extracted from *Monster Hunters: On the Trail With Ghost Hunters, Bigfooters, Ufologists, and Other Paranormal Investigators* by Tea Krulos, published by Chicago Review Press, 2015.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



TEA KRULOS is a journalist from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is the author of *Heroes in the Night* and *Monster Hunters*, both available from Chicago Review Press.

NAVAL GAZING

THE ENIGMA OF ÉTIENNE BOTTINEAU

In 1782, an unknown French engineer offered an invention better than radar: the ability to detect ships hundreds of miles away. **MIKE DASH** looks at the strange career and remarkable claims of Étienne Bottineau, the Wizard of Mauritius.

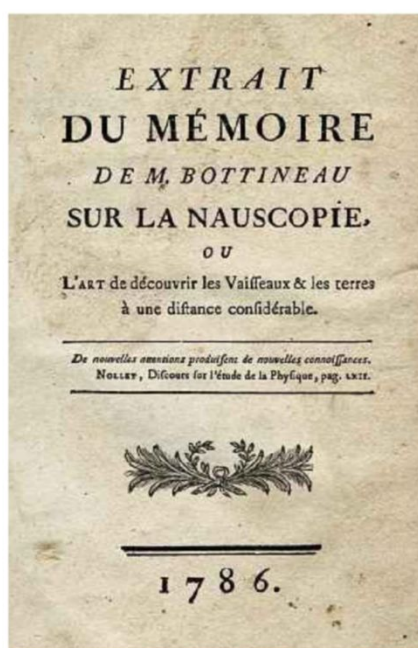
Port Louis, Mauritius, August 1782. The French Indian Ocean colony – highly vulnerable to British attack at the height of the American Revolutionary War – is in a state of alert. The governor, Viscomte François de Souillac, has been warned that a flotilla of 11 ships is approaching his island. Fearing that this is the long-awaited invasion fleet, de Souillac orders a sloop-of-war out to reconnoitre. But before the vessel can report, the panic ends. De Souillac is informed that the fleet has altered course and is now steering away from Mauritius. A few days later, when the sloop returns, the governor gets confirmation: the ships were actually East Indiamen, British merchant vessels making for Fort William in India.

All this is remarkable chiefly for the source of de Souillac's intelligence. The governor had his information not from signals made by ships sailing far offshore, nor from land-based lookouts armed with high-powered telescopes, but from a minor member of the local engineering corps, one Étienne Bottineau. And Bottineau was chiefly renowned in Mauritius (or "Île de France," to give it its contemporary French name) as a man who won a lot of bets in waterfront taverns thanks to his uncanny ability to foresee the arrival of ships that were anywhere from 350 to 700 miles (560-1,120km) from the island when he announced their approach.

These predictions, he insisted, were the products of neither sorcery nor good luck. They were, rather, the product of rigorous observation and of years of trial and error. For Bottineau claimed to be the inventor of a whole new "science" – famous then, forgotten now – that he called *nauscopie*: "the art of discovering ships and land at a great distance."

Today, memory of Bottineau survives only because the Frenchman became a bit-part player in the scientific literature of the early 19th century. He appears there as an enigmatic figure whose life and work were sometimes referenced but rarely critically examined. The Scottish physicist Sir David

BOTTINEAU WAS CALLED "THE WIZARD BEACON-KEEPER OF THE ISLE OF FRANCE"



Brewster, for example, mentions him in his influential *Letters on Natural Magic* (1832) as "the wizard beacon-keeper of the Isle of France," and for all his avowed scepticism, Brewster conceded that Bottineau "must have derived his power from a diligent observation of the phenomena of nature." And the Frenchman's new "science" remained of interest to at least one naval officer as late as the 1920s, just before the invention of radar rendered the whole idea of *nauscopie* redundant. Writing in 1928, the British hydrographer Rupert Gould

suggested that: "There can be little doubt that Bottineau was no charlatan – that he had made a discovery which would be of some interest even in these days of W/T, and must, in his own day, have been of much greater importance".

What concerns us here is whether Bottineau's claims stand up as well as Gould thought they did. There is no doubt that the Frenchman was, at the very least, able to confound many of the most senior officers stationed on Mauritius with the accuracy of his predictions. Colonel Trebond, the officer in charge of the island's infantry detachment, signed an affidavit confirming that "M. Bottineau has, at different periods, announced to him the arrival of more than a hundred vessels, two, three, or even four days before the coast signals" – adding that "moreover... he stated when there was only one, or when there were several vessels." And Trebond was backed up by M. Melis, the naval Commissary-General in Port Louis, who swore that Bottineau had predicted the arrival of 109 vessels and been wrong only twice.

De Souillac, meanwhile, was happy to sign a testimonial dated 18 April 1784, summarising the results of months spent carefully monitoring the engineer's predictions and confirming his belief that he: *sees in nature signs that indicate the presence of vessels, as we assert that fire exists in places where we see the smoke... this is the clearest explanation that he has afforded, in order to show that he did not make the discovery by knowledge of any art, or of any science, or by the application of any previous science... The signs, he says, indicate clearly enough the presence of vessels, but they only who can read the signs are able to judge of the distances, and this art, he asserts, is an extremely laborious study.*

Reading between the lines of the governor's report it seems that there is still room for some doubt. De Souillac went on to state that Bottineau often lost bets early in his career "because the vessels did not arrive at the appointed time" and "had for a long time been the dupe of his science." But he seems to have been persuaded that further study had produced solutions for these early

problems and that Bottineau's results had improved considerably:

Since the war has broken out, his announcements have been very numerous, and sufficiently correct to create a sensation in the island. We have conversed with him upon the reality of his science; and to have dismissed him as a quack would have been an injustice... What we can certify is, that M. Bottineau was almost always right.

THE ORACLE OF THE ISLE

Bottineau's own story, told in a biographical fragment and a memoir that he composed in about 1785, is as relatively straightforward as his description of *nauscopie* itself is stunningly opaque. Born in Anjou, probably some time in the early 1740s, he grew up in Nantes, where "being delighted with the appearance of the port and shipping, he came to the resolution of entering into the sea service." Employment with the French East India Company and the French Navy followed, and "as early as the year 1762," he wrote:

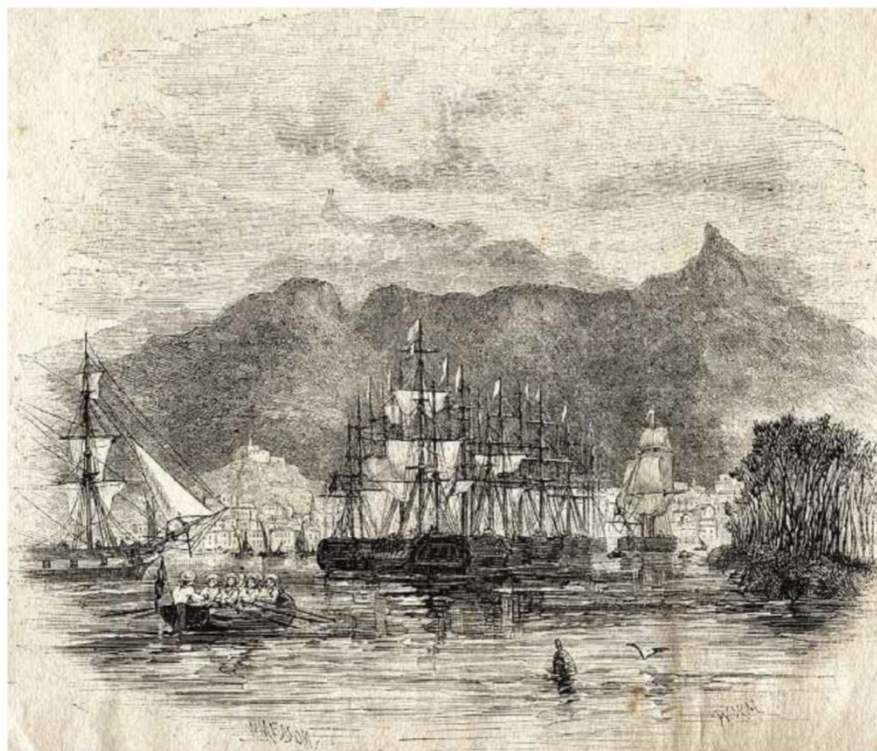
It appeared to me that a vessel approaching land must produce a certain effect upon the atmosphere, and cause the approach to be discovered by a practised eye even before the vessel itself was visible. After making many observations, I thought I could discover a particular appearance before the vessel came in sight: sometimes I was right, but more frequently wrong; so that at the time I gave up all hope of success.

In 1764, I was appointed to a situation in the Île de France: while there, having much leisure time, I again betook myself of my favourite observations...

The clear sky and pure atmosphere, at certain periods of the day, were favourable to my studies, and as fewer vessels came to the island, I was less liable to error than was the case off the coast of France, where vessels are continually passing... I had not been six months upon the island when I became confident that my discovery was certain."

Even so, it took quite some time for Bottineau to make a reputation for himself as an oracle. He wrote that his discovery "caused him to undergo every kind of persecution, and through the malice of his enemies he was treated as a slave and sent to Madagascar during the war of 1778." He was able to return to Mauritius, though, and by the early 1780s, he seems to have been widely regarded as pretty much infallible. By Bottineau's reckoning, he "announced the arrival of 575 vessels" between 1778 and 1782, "many of them four days before they became visible."

By this time Bottineau felt sufficiently confident to attempt to turn a profit from *nauscopie*. In 1780, he sent a letter home addressed to the Maréchal de Castries, then the Minister of Marine, announcing his "discovery" and offering it to the government in return for a substantial fee. Castries, in reply, ordered the French authorities on Mauritius to make a study of Bottineau's predictions, carefully recording them in a large ledger and comparing them to the actual arrival of ships in the colony for at



ABOVE: Port Louis, Mauritius (or "Île de France"). LEFT: Viscomte François de Souillac, the island's Governor.

least eight months. At the end of that time, Bottineau wrote: "I had announced *one hundred and fifty vessels in sixty-two informations*; none of which had been found to be false." Certainly he had been successful enough for de Souillac to offer him a testimonial and approve his return to France to lay his case before the Ministry of Marine.

The engineer landed in France in June 1784 and proceeded to Paris. There, however, things began to go badly wrong for Bottineau. De Castries would not see him; the influential Abbé Fontenay, editor of the semi-official *Mercure de France*, ridiculed *nauscopie* in his paper, suggesting that what was being seen was not "ships at sea, but castles in the air" – and before long the French Revolution put an end to all hope of any reward. As Gould remarked in characteristic style, Bottineau's "one convert, or semi convert, of note" during this period was of dubious value to him; he was "the famous or infamous Jean Paul

Marat... some time a troglodytic inhabitant of the Paris sewers; but latterly, until very properly stabbed in his bath by Charlotte Corday... one of the three most powerful men of the Terror." Marat's name was scarcely one to conjure with after he abandoned his career as a scientist and journalist in favour of becoming the chief supplier of victims to the guillotine; as many as 200,000 people died in the Reign of Terror. It is not very surprising to learn from the *Scots Magazine* of 1802 that "a Mr Bottineau, the inventor of a method by which the approach of ships at sea may be discovered... died lately in great misery at Pondicherry."

Whether one views Étienne Bottineau as a genius, a trickster or a fool depends largely on what one makes of the documents in the case. Setting aside Bottineau's own deposition, the evidence for *nauscopie* is drawn almost entirely from just two sources: a packet of papers that belonged to Marat and a short biographical memoir written by Étienne Jouy. Jouy, a one-time army officer and later a playwright, librettist and member of the Académie Française, encountered the "wizard of Mauritius" during a four-year sojourn in Sri Lanka in the late 1780s and had firsthand knowledge of his predictions. Marat's papers, meanwhile, include affidavits and Bottineau's own opaque description of his methods, but their provenance is unusual, to say the least. The surviving packet can be found not in a French archive but in a British magazine; the originals are lost; and the identity of the man who copied them remains unknown.

It appears that Marat's papers must have been seized by the Cabinet Noir, France's secret postal police, after his murder. With

the rise of Napoleon, most of the Cabinet's holdings from the revolutionary period were deemed surplus to requirements, and when in 1806 a well-connected lady by the name of Madame Guilleminot (sister-in-law to the general of the same name) took up the hobby of collecting autographs and applied to the Emperor's sister for some samples, "an immense package of letters" from the Cabinet's files was boxed up and sent to her in Brussels. This collection, which evidently included extracts from the Marat papers, was later sorted by an unnamed British gentleman detained in the city on parole during the Napoleonic Wars; he copied out some of the more interesting items, and on his eventual return to England, these began to appear as a series in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Given this exotic and uncheckable provenance, it seems worth noting that the *New Monthly's* extracts closely match several excerpts published during Bottineau's lifetime by the *Scots Magazine*, which include the most detailed account of the wizard's day-to-day observations.

ASSESSING THE WIZARD

The first thing to be noted, in attempting to assess Bottineau's claims, is that most of the material regarding the details of his predictions comes from his own hand: a lengthy statement regarding the eight-month trial, published by the *Scots Magazine* in 1786, and an account of his early life and the development of his new "art" that is incorporated in the Marat papers. Since both were written to promote *nauscopie* to the French Ministry of Marine, they can scarcely be taken at face value. And it is notable that of the four certificates Bottineau presented on his arrival in Paris, only de Souillac's was dated after the conclusion of the eight-month trial; of the other three, one makes no mention of Bottineau's results, and the other two, by Trebond and the Commissary-General, relate to his activities in the years leading up to 1782, when a much less careful note was being made of his predictions. De Souillac's testimonial, moreover, suggests that Bottineau's results were not quite so consistent as he liked to say; the result of his predictions, the governor wrote, "was, that several vessels that had been announced several days beforehand, arrived at the precise time; several others were delayed, and several did not arrive."

Perhaps some clue as to Bottineau's success can be found in de Souillac's rationalisation of these negative results. "It has since been proved that the delay in the arrival of some of the vessels was occasioned by contrary winds," he wrote, and "those which did not arrive, M. Bottineau is fully persuaded, were foreign vessels which passed by... whether this be the effect of chance, or otherwise, it would perhaps be imprudent in us to determine." In other words, Bottineau talked fast enough to worm his way out of looming trouble, and de Souillac was happy to pass the problem up to his superiors. The equivocal content of the governor's testimonial perhaps explains de Castries's



HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Revolutionary, scientist and journalist Jean Paul Marat. ABOVE RIGHT: Étienne Jouy, a one-time army officer, playwright, librettist and member of the Académie Française.

unwillingness to see the wizard in Paris.

In fairness to Bottineau, however, it must be said that many of the less plausible features of his predictions turn out to be later accretions to his legend. Some accounts of *nauscopie* suggest that it was so remarkably accurate that its practitioners could see men on the decks of far-distant ships; one suggests that when Bottineau once implausibly announced the approach of a four-masted vessel (three being the maximum fitted in those days), he was proven correct when two two-masted vessels lashed together eventually appeared. No such detailed accounts appear in Bottineau's writings, which instead describe the atmospheric disturbances he claimed to see and interpret as "a mass of vapours," a "cloudy mass" or a "meteor" which would eventually "develop and the colours assume a certain tone." Then, as a ship approached, the "mass" would "extend and become consistent".

Whatever it was that Bottineau saw, or claimed to see, it was certainly not easily visible to anybody else. But while it would be tempting to conclude that *nauscopie* was either an hallucination or a confidence trick – which the wizard's eagerness to profit and haste to explain away his failures certainly suggests – it must be noted in closing that he was not the only man who practised it. As late as 1818, a Royal Navy captain, Francis Maude, met an old Mauritian who told him that he had been instructed in the art by Bottineau himself, and who had – Maude said – "unvarying success". A Mr Thomas Trood claimed in 1866 to have rediscovered Bottineau's secret and codified it while stationed in Samoa. And the highly sceptical James Prior, a British naval officer who visited Mauritius in 1811 and thought that the idea of *nauscopie* seemed dangerously close to "second sight," still noted in his journal that "whether true or false, one of the persons thus gifted is said to have received a pension some years ago for his talent. This man communicated to government, that he

had distinctly observed, from the island, the shipwreck of a vessel in one of the ports of Madagascar. Though laughed at, he persisted in his story, mentioned the day, the hour and the precise scene of her distress, all of which being duly registered, turned out afterwards to be correct; the distance is *only* about 400 miles [640km]."

Well; it is just a story; Prior's *nauscopist* was only "said" to be receiving a pension; and the detail of his predictions surpassed by a worrying margin anything that Bottineau ever claimed. Nor was more ever heard of Thomas Trood. But if the wizard was correct in suggesting that *nauscopie* can only be effectively practised miles away from the cold and crowded sea lanes of the North Atlantic, in the gentle, balmy waters of the tropics, it is still pleasant to speculate on what might be achieved by someone with good eyesight, a hammock and a few years to spare on a beach in Mauritius. Might it be possible to get a grant for that? **FT**

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



MIKE DASH was FT's publisher for some years, as well as a regular contributor, and is the acclaimed author of the books *Tulipomania*, *Batavia's Graveyard*, *Thug*, *Satan's Circus* and *The First Family*.

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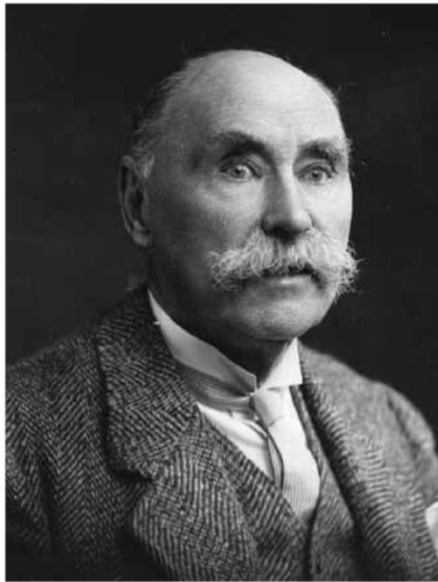
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THE CELTIC FRINGE

SD TUCKER swaps shamrocks for swastikas and explores the bizarre confluences that existed between fairies, folklore and fascism amongst the politicians and poets of 20th-century Ireland.



PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Three key figures (fairy fanciers all) in redefining Irish identity in the 20th century (left-right): two presidents, Douglas Hyde and Éamon de Valera, and a poet, WB Yeats.

Would you trust the judgement of a politician who claimed to have seen a horse transform into a human being? If you lived in Ireland between the years 1938 and 1945, then you would have had no choice but to do so: for your President (the nation's first) would have been Douglas Hyde, who had openly admitted to such an experience in print in 1911. As Hyde wrote: "I myself, when a boy of 10 or 11, was perfectly convinced that on a fine early dewy morning in summer when people were still in bed, I saw a strange horse run round a seven-acre field of ours and change into a woman, who ran even swifter than the horse, and after a couple of courses round the field disappeared into our haggard."¹ As an adult, Hyde was a little more sceptical about this experience than his childhood self had been, but nonetheless he still went public with it in an introduction to the scholar and fairy-hunter WY Evans-Wentz's book *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*.

But why on earth would Evans-Wentz have asked a politician to write an introduction to his findings about fair Erin's fairy-folk? Simply because Hyde had gained fame initially not through politics at all, but through his work as a folklorist and scholar of the old Irish tongue who had helped found the Gaelic League, an organisation devoted to preserving all things 'authentically Irish', in 1893. In 1892, Hyde had given an influential speech to the Irish National Literary Society,

DOUGLAS HYDE ADMITTED TO SEEING A HORSE TRANSFORMED INTO A HUMAN

entitled 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland'. In it, he argued the need for Ireland, then still a possession of the British Empire, to try and define itself against its colonial overlords in terms of culture, pastimes, literature and language. Centuries of English rule had, said Hyde, effectively 'deracinated' the Irish people – few could still speak Gaelic and, wherever you looked, you saw Irishmen dressing, talking, acting and, worst of all, even *thinking* like Englishmen. When the coloniser and the colonised begin having difficulty telling one another apart, then it is a sign that the indigenous culture is in dire danger of extinction. Clearly, action was needed; but of what kind?²

The subsequent great project of Irish cultural renewal took many forms, from the creation of a National Theatre to, ultimately, armed rebellion. But it also took on a more supernaturally-tinged shape, in which tales of fairies, ghosts and banshees were

reclaimed as being fundamental expressions of Ireland's rediscovered ancestral Celtic soul. Just as central to this project as the work of Douglas Hyde were the ideas of Ireland's great national poet and fairy-seer, WB Yeats (born 150 years ago this June). But Yeats, like Hyde, was not simply a writer – he was also a politician, sitting in the Irish Senate from 1922 to 1928. He had known Hyde since the 1880s, and was continually badgering him to write up a collection of Irish folktales he had been gathering. This book finally appeared in 1891 as *Beside the Fire*, and in the pages of the *National Observer* Yeats provided a glowing review. What particularly pleased him was that Hyde's book was not a one-off, but part of a sudden flood of learned texts about the folk-beliefs of the Irish – a fact for which he had an explanation. It was, said Yeats, a reaction against the dreary urban materialism and commercialism of the age, the "heavy chain" in which the Celts had been bound by their English overlords.³ "What need you, being come to sense/But fumble in a greasy till/And add the halfpence to the pence?" he sarcastically asked such people in his poem *September 1913*. Surely the Irish were born for better things than this? The fact of their ultimate rebellion in 1916 suggested they were indeed.

While obviously there were greater issues at stake than just folklore and fairies in Ireland's casting off of the Imperial yoke, nonetheless the poets and the folklorists had

played their part in establishing a viable Irish national consciousness, and as such, some, like Hyde and Yeats, were rewarded with positions of political influence. Yeats's main responsibility in government was to supervise the design of Ireland's national coinage; he ensured that virile, countryside-based things – salmon, horses and hounds were impressed on their fronts, thus 'disinfecting' even the crude and dirty tokens of Mammon in the new and pure Irish State. Yeats claimed to have had a "supernatural insight" that Ireland itself was like these initially blank coins, being "like soft wax" awaiting an imprint.⁴ As with his coins, so with his people; the Irish, as Hyde had suggested, were now to be defined *against* the English, Ireland providing the countryside to England's towns and cities, the spirituality to its rationalism, and the bucolic nature-mysticism to its crude money-worship.

In Ireland, then, an apparently somewhat anti-materialistic society, of the type that often appeals to poets and dreamers, was seemingly being created. For instance, Ireland's most significant 20th century leader was Éamon de Valera, whose commitment to defining Ireland as being inherently different from other lands extended to deliberately encouraging it to remain as agricultural a society as was possible. To the husband of a writer of children's folklore-books like de Valera, rural Ireland was still God's Own Country, and the pollution of modernity was to be excluded from this idyll as much as was practically possible. At one point, even harmless Curly-Wurly bars were banned from being brought past Customs and into

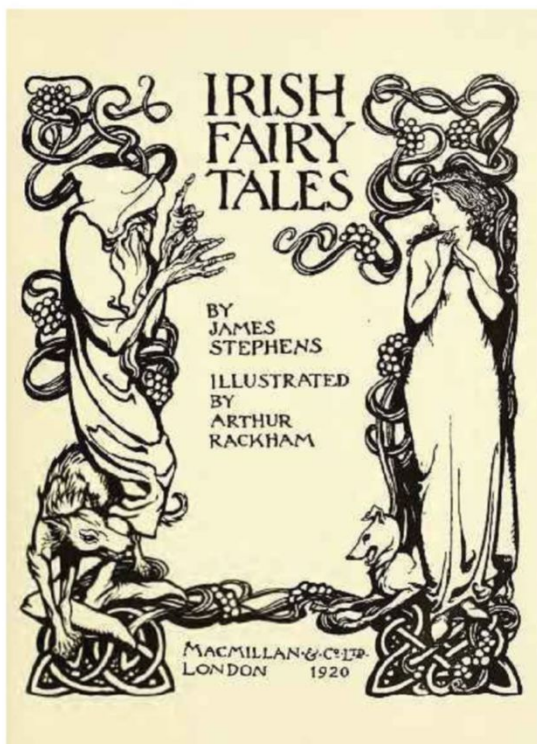
this green and peasant land, condemned as the unacceptable chocolatey face of Anglo-Saxon moral corruption. No doubt the beaming bairns of Ireland had the best teeth in Europe; but were their souls kept similarly free of rot and decay by de Valera's extreme import restrictions? That, at least, was the hope.⁵ Emerald Ireland, where Senators believed in fairies and Presidents collected folktales and resurrected ancient native languages from oblivion, seemed – if you squinted a bit – to show a successful illustration of the kind of alternative society, no longer wholly dominated by industry and economics, which could be allowed to arise when the people were brought back in touch with their landscape and traditions.

BLOOD AND SOIL

If the Irish soul supposedly drew its strength from the soil, however, then this also gave those of a Romantic bent the chance to engage in some rather dubious racial theorising. After all, Himmler felt something similar about the German soul – and several Irish nationalists did flirt with Fascist and quasi-Fascist ideas. One interesting example was Dermot MacManus, whose 1959 book *The Middle Kingdom*, a record of what he calls "the faerie world of Ireland", is a truly charming volume – but what was its true purpose? Ultimately, the book is benign, but it would be easy to see glimmerings of something slightly more sinister in it if you so wished. MacManus was not a Nazi, by any means, but he was certainly, let us say... a *most* committed patriot. As well as being an occultist who claimed to be able to cure

impotence through 'Oriental meditations', he was also, at various points, an IRA man, an officer in the Free State Army, and, later, one of the main driving forces behind a pseudo-Fascist paramilitary organisation known as the 'Blueshirts'.⁶ He was also a good friend of WB Yeats; as a man who could casually drop into conversation anecdotes about his father seeing a red-eyed demon lurking in his barn, or his grandfather exorcising a headless bipedal fox-spirit from the family orchard, he was just the kind of fellow the poet liked to talk with.⁷

The two chums shared similar opinions about many matters, including that the world was rapidly going to Hell in a handcart. In *The Middle Kingdom*, MacManus is pretty scathing about what he calls "the superficialities and robotisms" of modern life and industry and the "standardised" minds produced by modern education, "just as factories turn out cars". "In olden days," though, MacManus opined, things were different. Back then (whenever 'then' was), "the strength and vitality of a race lay in its healthy and virile country communities, living their self-sufficient lives according to nature's plan," something which meant that "the spiritual outlook was never absent from them," unlike with their modern counterparts. However, never fear, said MacManus, for "contacts with the spirit world [of fairies] have not yet vanished from Ireland and please God they never will, and this book shows they are still here." But *why* did they remain? Perhaps it was because, for MacManus, the inherent "mental powers" of all races differed, "some being quick-witted and others slow... And in



ABOVE: The romantic infatuation with native lore produced both fairy books aplenty and flirtations with quasi-Fascism that gave birth to organisations like the 'Blueshirts'.

KEYSTONEFRANCE / GETTY IMAGES

exactly the same way their psychic powers differ.” When it came to such things, he said, “the Celts are well above the European average while the English are below it”.⁸

This idea of producing ‘psychic hierarchies’ of races has a faint whiff of eugenics to it, of course – a whiff which, in Yeats’s final thinking, was to become rather stronger. In his deeply controversial 1938 essay *On the Boiler*, Yeats – by now an open fan of Mussolini – spoke approvingly of how, according to one dubious 16th century account, the Scottish people used to castrate disabled males, or bury alive any disabled women who became pregnant, “for the common good, lest the whole nation should be... corrupted.” Whilst Yeats admitted that this was “a severe doom”, nonetheless the idea deserved to be “more... looked into than it is.” Due to slum-dwellers and “the stupider and less healthy” sectors of the population breeding more quickly than the nature-loving peasants Yeats approved of, society was obviously doomed. The results of this racial degeneration were visible everywhere, said Yeats, even in apparently irrelevant matters such as the tragically reduced number of Shakespearean actors being employed in provincial towns.

But how was a Celt’s level of ‘racial worth’ to be measured? Why, by their propensity for nature-mysticism and undergoing supernatural experiences, of course! Referring to certain non-specified “American intelligence tests”, Yeats spoke of how they put Irish immigrants at the bottom of the pile when it came to mental capacity, and Anglo-Saxons highest. But, the poet said, these tests were biased, appropriate only for measuring the kind of intelligence needed to flourish in “a civilisation dominated by towns”, like England or America. However, amongst those Irish country-folk rejected as useless for life in the modern urban world, said Yeats, “exist precious faculties”. When he was a boy of seven, he explained, he knew “a little negro girl” who had an uncanny ability



LEFT: A 1904 Max Beerbohm cartoon showing ‘Mr WB Yeats, Presenting Mr George Moore to the Queen of Fairies’.

for finding hidden plovers’ nests, which led him to conclude that “clairvoyance, prevision and allied gifts, though rare among the educated classes, are common among peasants” and the ‘primitive’ races. These “gifts”, said Yeats, “must return”. But how? “Eugenical and psychical research,” he wrote, “are revolutionary movements... which sooner or later stir men to action.” By combining them both, “it may be, or it *must* be, that the best bred from the best shall claim again their ancient omens.”⁹

This all sounds horrible now – but we must remember that Yeats was writing before the coming of Nazi death-camps and that his concept of paranormal eugenics was not born out of racism but, essentially, of snobbery. As MacManus himself explained, Yeats “was not a Fascist, but he *was* an

authoritarian.”¹⁰ Basically, he wanted to create a kind of Romantic two-tier society in Ireland, with nature-loving, super-psychic peasants toiling happily on the land under a wise, cultured and artistic caste of benign aristocrats (of whom, naturally, he would be one). As Yeats’s biographer RF Foster put it, the eugenics Yeats proposed was not, like Hitler’s, based upon race as such, but upon combating “the coarsening and decadence of Irish culture through the infection of English materialism and the philistinism of a native *petit bourgeoisie*.”¹¹ He didn’t really want to bury the pregnant disabled alive but was deliberately exaggerating his snobbish anti-democratic leanings in order to generate controversy and sales; as he privately admitted, the essay was “so Tory [i.e. right-wing] there is not a Tory in the world will agree with it!”¹² Whilst Yeats was never really clear about how he would dispose of the base, unworthy, materialist masses – maybe the fairies would conveniently abduct them – we can’t automatically presume he wanted to kill them. *On the Boiler* consists half of genuine distaste, half of cartoonish posturing; but the bizarre occult-political ideas it contains could surely only have arisen in Ireland during this hectic and fevered period, when folklore and extreme politics began to fuse. Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Fairy, perhaps? **F**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



SD TUCKER is a Merseyside-based writer whose books are *Paranormal Merseyside*, *Terror of the Tokoloshe* and (forthcoming) *The Hidden Folk*. Currently at work on two books with the provisional titles *Great British Eccentrics* and *Forgotten Science*, he is a regular contributor to FT.

NOTES

- 1 WY Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, 2008, BiblioBazaar, p.56. A ‘haggard’ is an enclosure used for storing grain, hay, etc. Maybe the horse-woman was hungry?
- 2 RF Foster, *WB Yeats, A Life: Vol 1: The Apprentice Mage*, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp125-126. Hyde initially wanted this project to be ‘above politics’, but it was inevitably later dragged into that very sphere.
- 3 WB Yeats, ‘Irish Folk-Tales’, *National Observer*, 28 Feb 1891; reproduced in *WB Yeats: Writings on Irish Folklore, Legend and Myth*, 1993, Penguin Classics, pp68-72

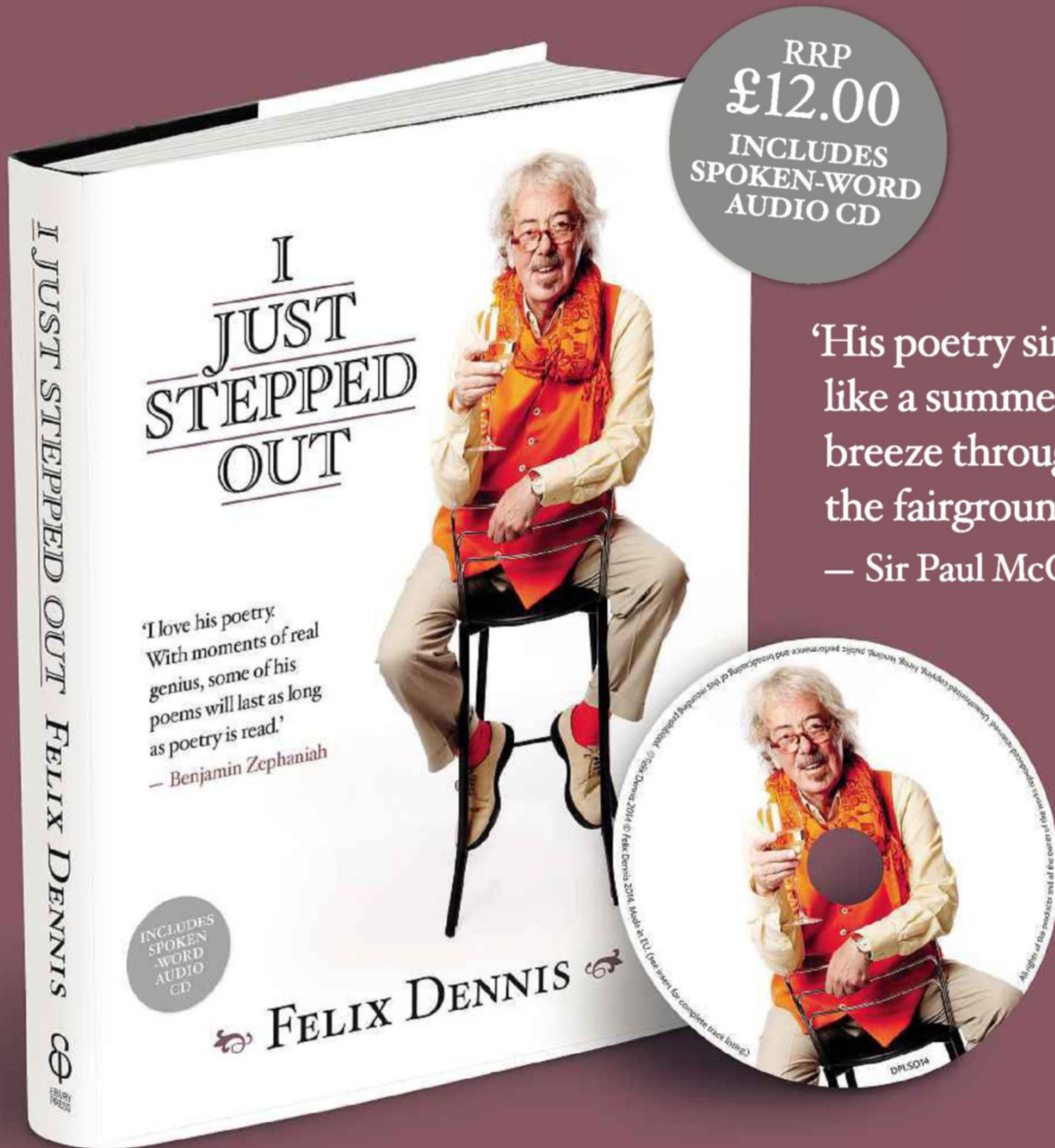
- 4 Yeats cited in the Introduction to the Everyman edition of his ‘Complete Poems’, p.xix
- 5 This is the popular view, anyway; in truth, these import-restrictions and focus upon increasing agricultural productivity and participation were as much the result of wider economic factors as of Romantic Irish nationalists’ hatred of foreign chocolate-bars or love of the soil. De Valera and others, partially because of an early trade-war with England, had tried to ensure that Ireland was entirely ‘self-sufficient’ in all its industries – including confectionary and farming – so it would be able to stand alone and provide all its people’s needs without

- relying upon untrustworthy foreigners. Irish businessmen were perfectly free to set up their own domestic factories making rebranded knock-off Curly Wurlys and suchlike if they wanted to.
- 6 RF Foster, *WB Yeats, A Life – Vol 2: The Arch-Poet*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp509, 257, 467-8, 472. The Blueshirts were not Fascist *precisely*, but with militaristic uniforms, Hitler-salutes, antagonistic rallies, anti-Semitic attitudes, etc, it was clear in what direction they were ultimately headed.
- 7 See Dermot MacManus, *The Middle Kingdom*, 1979, Colin Smythe, pp133-137, for these yarns.
- 8 MacManus, pp29, 14-15 & 13-14. These words

echo a famed radio-address given by Éamon de Valera in 1943, ‘The Ireland That We Dreamed Of’, which began thus: “The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right-living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in

- short, of a people living the life God desires men should live.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ireland_That_We_Dreamed_Of)
- 9 WB Yeats, *On the Boiler*, in *Yeats: The Major Works*, Oxford Classics, 2001, pp390, 391, 393, 394-395 & 401.
- 10 Foster, 2005, p475. Also, Yeats wasn’t even of pure Celtic blood himself – he came from Anglo-Irish stock – so would have been unlikely to have desired the elimination of the ‘psychically unfit’ on purely racial lines.
- 11 Foster, 2005, pp630-631.
- 12 *Ibid*, 2005, pp.612-613.

I JUST STEPPED OUT



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— Sir Paul McCartney

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The Enfield Poltergeist show

GUY LYON PLAYFAIR wonders whether Sky's new drama missed a trick or two



GUY LYON PLAYFAIR has been a member of the SPR since 1973. He investigated the Enfield Poltergeist with Maurice Grosse, and recorded the experience in *This House is Haunted* (1980).

Sky Living TV showed its three-part serial *The Enfield Haunting* in May, after a well-organised publicity campaign that sold quite a few copies of my book *This House is Haunted* even before the screening, and generated some good pieces by reporters who had firsthand experience of the original events, notably Michael Hellicar of the *Daily Mail* and Douglas Bence, a member of the *Daily Mirror* team who first covered the story, but for whom we might never have heard of the case. The programme was seen by about 850,000 people, and given a surprisingly good reception by both critics and viewers. The general consensus seemed to be that the film was very well made and very scary. But was it a fair account of what actually happened?

Well, yes and no – mostly no. It got off to a good start, with Timothy Spall, looking remarkably like chief investigator Maurice Grosse, rolling up in a shiny red E-type Jaguar similar to Maurice's and meeting the four children whose mother, convincingly played by Rosie Cavaliero, had been one of the first witnesses to the early events – the knocking on the walls, the chest of drawers sliding towards her, and the marbles and bits of Lego flying about when it seemed impossible that any of her kids could have thrown them.

Then, near the end of part one, the story veered away from fact and towards fiction as Matthew Macfadyen (me) is levitated up to the ceiling, which never happened to me or anybody else, as far as I know, except perhaps DD Home some 150 years ago. Oh dear, I thought, it's going to be just another 'horror' film, though purporting to be 'Based on Real Events', as viewers were assured at the start. That was just one of many incidents that were only very loosely



based, if at all, on reality. The Jaguar, at least, was real.

More perplexing was the omission of a number of real events which *were* solidly based on reality, some of them even photographed by Graham Morris, which were as dramatic as anything Sky's special effects wonks could come up with: the self-twisting curtain, the bedclothes pulled off Janet, the flying pillows, the gas fire wrenched out of the wall, the cushion materialising on the roof, Janet seen levitating from across the road, and, in the most dramatic incident of all, apparently going through the wall into the house next door, where a book belonging to her was indeed found, there being no conceivable normal explanation for how it got there.

Also lacking was any mention of our efforts to record proper scientific evidence, which we did successfully for at least two of the phenomena: the extraordinary male voice that spoke through Janet, and the rappings we heard on many occasions on floors and walls.

Eleanor Worthington-Cox, who played Janet, is already an award-winning young actress of whom I am sure we will hear more. She had a good go at producing that eerie voice, but did not sound in the least like an old man, as Janet did. Mention might have been

ABOVE: Eleanor Worthington-Cox as Janet in *The Enfield Haunting*.

made of the recordings we made with the laryngograph, which showed fairly conclusively that Janet was using her 'false vocal folds', not at all easy for an untrained person, let alone a 12-year old girl.

As for the raps, these have now been analysed by our colleague Barrie Colvin, and shown to have acoustic signatures quite unlike the 'control' raps made by me at the time, which means they are not at all easy to fake. His lengthy report was published in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* in 2010 and has been widely ignored ever since.

Poltergeists continue to be treated as light entertainment, and it may not occur to its makers that they cause real distress to ordinary innocent people. If these were to visit their doctors complaining of a headache, or whatever, how would they feel if they were told that there were no such things as headaches, which had long been debunked by scientists as mediæval superstition, childish imagination or that perennial favourite 'attention-seeking'?

This is just the kind of reaction poltergeist victims regularly face. The Enfield family even faced it from the psychiatrist responsible for the mental wellbeing of children, who refused to see them. (I should add that with the exception of this fellow, the local council was very supportive and sympathetic, but the welfare officers I met pointed out correctly that they were not trained to deal with poltergeists. Perhaps they should be.)

Throughout the Enfield case, Maurice Grosse and I constantly witnessed incidents for which no normal explanation seems possible, as did about 30 other people. Yet we never hear any serious discussion about how such incidents, which have been reported for at least 500 years, *could* have happened despite violating much of what we think we know about science, and above all *why* they happened to this particular family when they did, yet do not happen to the thousands of families in similar circumstances. Easier to dismiss the evidence *en bloc* and put it all down to childish pranks, or to use it for fantasy entertainment.

Poltergeist outbreaks are inherently dramatic, often more so in real life than they tend to be in fiction, and the Enfield case was definitely one that needs no fictional additions. **FT**

The great yarri mystery

CHRIS MCLEAN ponders the possible identity of the elusive Queensland tiger and studies a line-up of the (un)usual suspects.



CHRIS MCLEAN is a writer and musician dwelling in the forests of southeastern Australia. He has a passion for the natural world and a keen interest in cryptozoology.

The Queensland marsupial tiger is one of Australia's most elusive and tantalising cryptid animals – not a true tiger but a striped beast the size of a medium-large dog, often referred to by the north Queensland aboriginal name 'yarri', and for a time included in books on Australian fauna. Nowadays, 'yarri' is applied to the spot-tailed quoll or tiger quoll, as though Australian naturalists have, by some private consensus, agreed to subsume the identity of this mystery animal into one more firmly known to exist (albeit white-spotted and the size of a small cat). From the earliest written reports, the yarri or Queensland tiger was always understood to be a different animal to this species of quoll; one that was larger, less common and far more elusive, preying on animals the size of chickens, rock wallabies and larger livestock. In reviewing the details of numerous encounters on public record, ¹ I believe there are sufficient clear sightings by apparently credible, level-headed people (some of them professional naturalists) to take the matter seriously, despite the current lack of any irrefutable material evidence. The landscape and vegetation of north Queensland in particular are certainly dense, rugged and inaccessible enough to allow populations to have lingered, only occasionally being seen by humans. It has been assumed that the yarri described to Carl Lumholtz by indigenous informants ² is always the same creature as the Queensland tiger reported by settlers since at least 1871. Divergence in their details suggests that cryptid sightings falling under the umbrella of the yarri or Queensland tiger involve two or more different species of animal. There are several possible identities to consider.

The most likely one, at least in some cases, is the Tasmanian tiger or thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*) then extant on the mainland, despite its dog-like appearance. Lumholtz's yarri could well be a thylacine, although no stripes were



mentioned; also, the yarri is supposed to have some arboreal tendencies and the tree-climbing ability of thylacines was/is limited. Nonetheless, this high-profile 'extinct' species of marsupial seems to account very well for some yarri sightings, particularly those which stated that the animal looked just like those seen in old photos and the famous film footage of the last captive thylacine. However, some sightings that appear to describe a thylacine-like animal differ in important respects, such as a tufted or bushy tail, stripes or other patterning that doesn't match those of known thylacines, a cat-like head, and a snout sometimes described as 'pig-like'. An unknown *Thylacinus* species or mainland variant of *T. cynocephalus* is another possibility that has been suggested, ³ which could account for some of these differences. Other *Thylacinus* species (and similar, related species from different genera, such as *Nimbacinus dicksoni*, the ancient fox-sized 'Riversleigh thylacine') are known from the mainland fossil record, but have been extinct for many thousands

ABOVE: The spotted-tail or tiger quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*).

ABOVE: Skeleton of a marsupial lion (*Thylacoleo carnifex*) in Naracoorte Caves National Park, South Australia.

of years. ⁴ The known presence of feral dogs and dingo/dog hybrids further confuses the issue, but although some such animals may look unusual they are generally easily identified as canine.

A major possibility is a particularly large, unknown species of quoll (*Dasyurus* spp.). There has been some confusion between the largest known quoll species in Queensland, the tiger quoll or spot-tailed quoll (*D. maculatus*, which has white spots), and the larger cryptid under discussion here. The former are often referred to as 'native cats', despite only having the most passing resemblance to a felid; although they are sometimes called 'tiger cats', despite lacking stripes, some locals in the know use this term only in reference to the large cryptid. ⁵ Some sightings could be interpreted as a very large quoll-like animal. *D. maculatus* has a body up to 30in (76cm) long and tail up to 22in (55cm), so can be sizeable, but it doesn't stand very high and the white spot markings do not fit – hence the proposed existence of a less common and unknown quoll species which is larger and may have dark stripes. Williams and Lang ⁶ also suggested some species of cuscus (*Phalanger intercastellanus* and *Spiloguscus maculatus*) as possible candidates, but both species are smaller than a tiger quoll, have tails that are hairless over much of their length, and lack the right markings or coat colour. In addition, they are only known to occur in far north Queensland, and many claimed encounters are also from the southeast.

Escaped big cats or super-sized feral cats are possible culprits for other sightings, and such animals are certainly seen and shot in many parts of Australia. However, it's significant that only a small portion of the sightings I reviewed described animals that looked like a known species of big cat or an overgrown moggy. Most are described as cat-like in some sense, but not an actual feline. Other exotic cat-like animals also may bear some resemblance to the unusual creatures that have been seen in Queensland. Naturalist Gary Opit said that the animal he sighted in 1969, besides a "very thickly furred thylacine", ⁷ could possibly have been something like an African palm civet (*Nandinia binotata*) or Celebes/Sulwasi palm civet (*Macrogalidia musschenbroekii*), to which I would add the banded palm civet (*Hemigalus derbyanus*), which has the benefit of prominent thick, dark stripes. However, all of these animals are more or less the size of domestic cats. Another objection is that these

animals are not native to Australia nor are there any known feral populations, and the yarri was presumably known to local humans before European colonists arrived. A counter-objection is that such alien animals may have been introduced by pre-colonial Asian traders; but this still does not account for the great discrepancy in size.

Tree kangaroos (*Dendrolagus spp.*) have been proposed to account for some yarri reports,⁸ but again, these are relatively small animals. On the ground, they can walk and scamper to some extent on all fours, but can only move at greater speeds by hopping on two legs. They don't have an aggressive temperament (except in territorial disputes), let alone fearsome fangs, though they do possess large claws. Also, their tails are much longer than their bodies, and most yarri sightings report a tail of similar length to the body. The two species known in Australia (which both occur in Queensland) lack stripe-like markings, as do all other known species. They are also (mostly) vegetarian, though some species also eat birds and possibly other small animals,⁹ but preying on rock wallabies seems a bit of a stretch for any tree kangaroo. We'll come back to kangaroos in a moment.

A popular theory (except amongst palaeontologists) is that the yarri might be a living descendant of the marsupial lion, *Thylacoleo carnifex*.¹⁰ This amazing animal lived during the Pleistocene, and probably co-existed with humans for at least a short time before its extinction (believed to be c.40,000-45,000 years ago, along with most other megafauna). Its secret survival to the present day is highly unlikely, but reports from people in all of the eastern mainland states who believe they have seen a strange animal that *could* be a marsupial lion encourage me to keep an open mind on the matter. However, zoologist Malcolm Smith has pointed out¹¹ that no yarri sightings in Queensland describe the unique dentition that identifies *T.*



Sightings of 'Queensland tigers' continue to occur

carnifex and kin. Also proposed in this category by some ever-hopeful theorists are unknown descendants of the slightly smaller *Thylacoleo crassidentatus* (found in Pliocene deposits in Queensland) and other smaller marsupial lion genera which pre-date *T. carnifex* in the fossil record. Naturally, their modern survival is even more unlikely due to their antiquity (from the Oligocene to the Pliocene).

That last point hardly lends credibility to my new suggestion that the cryptids encountered in some sightings might possibly be a living descendant of the powerful-toothed giant rat kangaroo or 'Riversleigh killer kangaroo', *Ekaltadeta ima*. This carnivorous or omnivorous animal is known only from a few Miocene fossils from northern Queensland,

ABOVE: A mother and baby Bennett's tree kangaroo (*Dendrolagus bennettianus*).

and would have been around the size of a large wallaby. Unlike a wallaby, it appears to have been a quadruped, running on all fours with relatively long, strong front legs and a broad, sturdy head.¹² It is the oldest known species of propleopine or giant rat kangaroo, a lineage which led to the genus *Propleopus* (all from the Pleistocene and believed long extinct). *P. oscillans* was probably the least carnivorous but also one of the largest, around the size of a grey kangaroo. Mostly found in more southerly regions, fossil remains have also been found in SE Queensland. The similar-sized Queensland species *P. chillagoensis* is thought to have been the most specialised carnivore of the lot, though still omnivorous to some extent. Less is known of *P. wellingtonensis*, from New South Wales.¹³ If these animals had bands of dark stripes and a bushy or tufted tail, they could theoretically fit some sightings. Could a descendant of these quadrupedal giant rat kangaroos have survived to modern times in the wilds of Queensland? This is very unlikely, due to the great age of the only known remains and lack of any known large intermediary descendants from post-Pleistocene times. Yet for the sake of considering all possible candidates we must include even remote possibilities, because we really don't know what we're dealing with in this mystery.

Sightings of so-called Queensland tigers continue to occur, although tangible evidence of their existence, let alone their identity, remains elusive. Accepting the notion that these encounters may encompass not one, but a variety of cryptids (as well as misidentifications of known native or feral animals) addresses the inconsistent nature of their descriptions without making the unproven assumption that most, or all, witnesses must have simply been mistaken. Hopefully the near future will reveal some solid answers to this intriguing cryptozoological puzzle. **FT**

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The hydrochloric acid fairy?

The Victorian writers of children's scientific fairy tales might have drenched their tales in saccharine, but to no avail: modern science – and the fairies? – triumphed



Science in Wonderland

The Scientific Fairy Tales of Victorian Britain

Melanie Keene

Oxford University Press 2015

Hb, 227pp, illus, £16.99, ISBN 9780199662654

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.29

Monsters of the elder time can still be seen today, if you take the train to Sydenham. In the gardens of Crystal Palace sprawl the concrete megalosaur and iguanodon, looking all the more primæval because they are so obviously Victorian. The science of the 1850s, so primitive now, then so thrillingly up-to-date, had tried to realise the new discoveries of palæontology in three dimensions; but to a modern eye the lumpy results seem more like dragons than dinosaurs.

That was not what Prof Owen and Waterhouse Hawkins intended. They thought they were sculpting authentic monsters whose superior reality would eclipse the old fables. And a host of hack writers stepped in to help these pedagogues, explaining to children that science was the new fairyland, and that awe, wonder and delight were wasted on fiction when they could much more properly be applied to things seen down a microscope.

Now it's true that the idea of scientific fairytales arouses a kind of unease, felt whenever something hybridises cherished

cultural limits. It seems a bit much to have enticed childhood towards that chilling 19th-century ideal of rational recreation. And did the pill of knowledge really need so much sugar? Victorian kids already thought that butterfly nets and aquaria were cool, without needing to imagine their contents as surrogate fairies. But maybe that misses the point. Through *Magic Glasses* and *Fairy Know-a-Bit* may not say much about electricity or entomology but they do tell us about science in the Victorian imaginary.

In the year of the Great Exhibition, the struggle to accept the scientist as a Wise Man was by no means over. Awarding scientific degrees in universities, or placing scientific advisers on the boards of public works, was still the unfulfilled ambition of young hotheads. Over the next 50 years science became (as Fort would have put it) the new Dominant, and in its totalising ambition it sought to dominate not just what was done but what could be imagined. Puck claimed to be able to put a girdle round the earth, but submarine telegraph cables could do it so much better.

"Can any magic be more marvellous than this?", the authors of scientific fantasy tales keep saying, to which the obvious answer is yes, otherwise you wouldn't be writing fairy stories in the first place. The manifest purpose of the stories is to impart information, but you can't help suspecting a latent desire to convert the pliable child mind to rationalism.

At their best, these stories inspired a sense of wonder in the everyday; at their worst, a sort of perverse mystification of the obvious. All science relies on some

"Even children know that magic speaks in a language of love, dread and fate, and science doesn't"

kind of narrative metaphor – we talk of 'resistance' and 'attraction' – but even so, illustrations of the Fairy of Hydrochloric Acid are taking things a bit too far. Throughout *The Fairyland of Chemistry: Explorations in the World of Atoms*, the fable is more of a burden to understand than the actual chemistry, suggesting that its author needed to involve fairies – and children – for some unspoken cultural work.

Being weaned off real fairytales, via these scientific substitutes, seems to have been an implicit condition of growing up. In those days, of course, adults were adults; there was no getting down with the kids. In *Fairy Geography*, a patriarchally bearded uncle in a top hat instructs two nicely-dressed and well-behaved children as they sit on a magic carpet, a middle-class rewriting of the aristocratic Grand Tour through the machinery of wonder. Throughout these stories, the fairy (or the drop of water, or lump of coal, or whatever has jumped up into notice) ventriloquises for the author, thereby enabling him or (more often) her to sidestep childhood's resistance to authority figures. Fairies, after all, are small, so they can wear an academic gown and a grave expression without seeming to talk down to their pupils.

Children like hearing accounts

of the strange, so authors were inclined – in a competitive book market – to nervously trumpet the merits of the 'true' scientific story over fantasy. Again and again, they insist that science is just like magic, but this only works at the level of bright superficial externals. Even children know that magic speaks in a language of love, dread and fate, and science doesn't. But because the Victorians preferred microscopic analysis of waterdrops to that of their own consciousnesses, they took no notice of what fairy stories were about, and copied only their external details.

Disenchantment had its limits. Little Jack and Ethel might be trained out of seeing non-entomological fairies in the garden, but they were still expected to accept a supernatural origin for the natural world.

As the century wore on, and evolution made inroads into popular consciousness, this position became harder to sustain. Like all obsessively repeated statements, the authorial claim that science was unique in being both wonderful and true reveals a suppressed uncertainty about whether it was really true after all, in the sense that faith is true. And then Einstein brought back all the hard questions which had never entirely been swept under the magic carpet: questions of whether science was hard fact, or whether it was simply a narrative – even a fantasy – which gave the best approximation to an unknowable reality. As usual, the fairies have had the last laugh. Jeremy Harte

Fortean Times Verdict

HOW VENTRILOQUIST FAIRIES EXPLAINED THE VICTORIAN WORLD

9

A thought experiment

A study of digital existentialism thrills – and irritates – but shifts perceptions and advances McLuhan’s media philosophy



The Bright Labyrinth

Sex, Death and Design in the Digital Regime

Ken Hollings

Strange Attractor Press 2014

Pb, 334pp, illus, notes, ind, £14.99, ISBN 9781907222184

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.49

This book purports to be an exploration of our relationship with media and machines. What it really is, is digital existentialism.

We all have idle moments during which we can briefly hold onto absurd thoughts. Dismissing portions of logic, retaining others, we’re able to run fantastic thought experiments.

Young children, ignorant of reality’s rules, are best at this. As adults, this may happen as we fall asleep. Some take drugs. Strangely, it can also, happen while focusing on a repetitively mindless task; even as we restrict the mind, we give it permission to roam, completely unrestricted. Anyone who’s ever been completely bored knows this. It’s not profound. Every one of us is once in a while capable of ‘one-hand-clapping’ sorts of deliberation.

In such a momentary, magical atmosphere we’re able to briefly catch and hold onto the metaphorical smoke of thought, and twist it like a tangible object. For example, “If mother were still my mother but I had a different father, who would I be?” “Do others see the colour red the way I do? What if my red is their blue?” Welcome to the logic of Hollings’s *Bright Labyrinth*.

Such considerations usually burst like bubbles. Hollings holds onto them for more than 300

pages, coming close to becoming Edgar Allan Poe’s allegorical “book that does not permit itself to be read”. This is due as much to its shifting assortment of subjects and dizzying array of tautologies, as much as it is to Hollings’s sense of organisation; narrative clarity is not his strong suit, and he’s best in small doses. It’s difficult to comprehend and then retain the provisos of such a massive thought experiment.

This is a stupid book. I hate it. I often wanted to pitch it across the room. A few times I actually did toss it a few feet. And then, after a day or two of irritation, while its many arguments boiled away in my head, I’d pick it up again. I just couldn’t help it. *The Bright Labyrinth* is frustrating, irritating, outlandish, maddening, at times ignorant, smug, pedantic, frequently brilliant, amazingly fresh, poetic, and I love it.

The Bright Labyrinth dances through history and myth like Velikovsky, throwing in electronics, politics and myth. Throughout, Hollings delights in offering near-incomprehensible idiot global statements such as, “Ritual has been replaced in the age of digital representation by process, which is the external expression of instability.” Silly, outrageous, irrelevant. And then backs it up with deeply concerning examples and footnotes.

He makes far too much of Marshall McLuhan while at the same time adding one absolutely brilliant extension to McLuhan’s media philosophy: in the current age, the medium is the message is the audience. One extreme example, simplified here: audience is the sole mechanism that defines the form of communication we call terrorism. In fact, such a model is implicit in all of what we call the digital network – with disturbing implications.

The Bright Labyrinth

offers dozens of such mass-communication epiphanies, and reviewing it is like writing a new closing chapter of the Bible, starting with, “In conclusion...” I’ll unwisely attempt a summary of its central observation, based on 10 interlocking arguments, drawn from dozens of fields, which otherwise would appear to be unrelated:

We have at last, collectively, succeeded in creating one single artificial intelligence. We have uploaded all we are into it. In turn, it has consumed us, without our knowing, noticing or even suspecting. It is the Internet. It collects and extends all human experience, including birth and (a new? redefined?) afterlife, becoming an edited yet universal succeeding existence. As soon as we think we can stand apart and perceive it, we do not. This is because, by definition, the act of observation becomes part of it; all experience is instantly subsumed, has been subsumed, will be subsumed. This may be a pretty awful thing, but then our previous existence was pretty awful, too.

That’s a woefully simplistic explanation, and it’s the supporting arguments that are really provocative. (I suspect that Hollings, in an amazing lapse, was oddly unaware of the parallel with Schrödinger. He cites the physicist only once, and then on a different matter.)

The Bright Labyrinth shifted my perception of media, Internet and world. I came away from it certain of only two things: a) The author is likely to write in and state that I’ve completely misunderstood his work; and b) That no other response would have amused and perhaps even pleased him more; he exactly foresaw such a media response as part of his labyrinth.

Jay Rath

Fortean Times Verdict

A VELIKOVSKY FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

9

The Earth

From Myths to Knowledge

Hubert Krivine

Verso Press 2015

Hb, 304pp, illus, refs, ind, £20 ISBN 978178168799

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00



Vast chasms – intellectual equivalents of the Valles Marineris – divide evolutionists from intelligent

designers, geologists from biblical literalists, and scientists from many post-modernist critics and religious fundamentalists. But misunderstandings abound on both sides. Scientists can arrogantly dismiss deeply held and profound religious beliefs and insights. Lay people can mistake scientific theory as ‘simple speculation’ rather than, as palaeontologist Scott Sampson remarks in *Dinosaur Odyssey*, “a well-substantiated explanation [...] based on an interconnected set of hypotheses [that] has withstood numerous attempts at falsification”.

In *The Earth: From Myths to Knowledge*, French physicist Hubert Krivine examines the nature of truths scientists hold to be self-evident, such as descent with modification, and that the Earth is 4.55 billion years old and orbits the Sun at an average radius of 150 million kilometres. Yet even “very educated individuals” (his italics) often perceive these truths “as naïve or even improper”. Aye, and there’s the rub.

So, Krivine uses the history of ideas about the Earth’s age and movement to analyse the nature of scientific truth. He aims to rehabilitate the notion of scientific truth “against the idea that science is no more than a socially constructed doxa” (popular belief or opinion). He eloquently illustrates, for instance, the importance of “understanding changes of scale”. We began, he suggests with “the idea of a flat earth without development, at the centre of a small universe”. Now we have to think in terms of the Earth as one of a multitude of worlds, developing over billions of years, an insignificant element in a perhaps torus-shaped, three-

dimensional infinite space.

Getting your head around these changes of scale can be hard, which contributes to the divide between science, society and religion. Even as a biologist, I find that grasping the true meaning and implications of the deep time needed for evolution is tricky. Fortunately, Krivine builds his arguments slowly. He reasons carefully and persuasively rather than by emotion and polemic, even showing his working in detailed mathematical discussion in appendices. (You can ignore this bit without losing anything.)

The Earth is a much-needed antidote to the overly simplistic explanations and posturing that all too often dominates discourses between religion and science, and, in turn, deepen and widen the chasm. On three or four occasions, I didn't agree with Krivine's interpretations – but these concerned peripheral, minor, topics rather than the core 'truths' and issues. Those of us who want a rational, sensible, respectful discussion between science and religion, and between science and the intellectual world more widely, should welcome Krivine's serious book, about serious issues, for serious readers. Mark Greener

Fortean Times Verdict

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED – SERIOUSLY

8

Fox Tossing, Octopus Wrestling & Other Forgotten Sports

The Most Dangerous & Bizarre Sports in History

Edward Brooke-Hitching

Simon & Schuster 2015

Hb, 258pp, illus, £12.99, ISBN 9781471148989

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69



What can I say? If you need to be convinced of humanity's lunatic inventiveness (cannon baseball? competitive drowning?), just get it – the book's an absolute delight.

Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict

A WELL RESEARCHED TREAT FOR SPORTS LOVERS AND PHOBICS

9

Five per cent solution

ETH believers will dismiss Clarke and his interviewees, but the psychosocial hypothesis sees UFOs as a serious field of study



How UFOs Conquered the World

The History of a Modern Myth

David Clarke

Aurum Press 2015

Hb, illus, notes, bib, ind, 312pp, £18.99, ISBN 9781781313039

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99

First, a caveat. David Clarke interviewed me about UFO religions for this book – so I'll be reviewing only the 306 pages I'm not mentioned in... But the same would apply to plenty of other fortean writers: Mark Pilkington, Andy Roberts, John Rimmer, Peter Brookesmith, Jenny Randles and many more. If nothing else, this illustrates the wonderful interconnectivity of fortean topics.

Clarke discovered the world of UFOs when he was 10. *How UFOs Conquered the World* is a chronicle of how he slowly came to believe in something other than nuts-and-bolts spacecraft visiting our planet, the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH). It's peopled with fascinating characters, from early members of UFO societies to government officials to hoaxers to an elderly priest who believes that UFOs come from the devil.

There's a lot of common sense in this book. If 95 per cent of UFOs can be identified as Venus, weather balloons, sky lanterns or birds, the likelihood is that the other five per cent have an equally mundane explanation, rather than being something utterly different and alien. Occam's Razor is wielded more than once.

Clarke cites ufologist J Allen Hynek that "we do not study actual UFOs but reports of UFOs made by people" and points out

that people, however credible they may seem, are notoriously unreliable witnesses: "Confidence is not a reliable predictor of accuracy." Even "so-called trained observers" are very poor at estimating distance, speed and size. He touches on the well-studied phenomenon of false memories, and suggests that we see what we expect to see.

He interviews David Simpson, who set up the Society for Investigation of UFO Phenomena in the 1960s. Becoming involved in the Warminster sightings, Simpson found that the UFO watchers "talked about scientists being closed-minded. But for them, being open-minded meant being prepared to accept anything as evidence. Even if it was inconsistent, self-contradictory or demonstrably wrong. They were not willing to accept rational analysis, or prepared to discard discredited theories."

For such people, as this book shows over and over again, belief in UFOs is precisely that: belief. In recent years Clarke has been instrumental in the release of the Ministry of Defence UFO files; Linda Unwin, in charge of the MOD's UFO desk, told him that "if we emptied the contents of our filing cabinets into Trafalgar Square tomorrow they would still say it's a big whitewash. That's because unless the contents agree with their preconceived belief in aliens they will never be satisfied." For ufologists, Clarke says, "the belief has become the arbiter of the evidence, not the evidence the test of the belief. This is the very opposite of scientific thinking."

There's a clear resemblance to conspiracy theorists, for whom the common-sense explanation is never acceptable, and who go for the opposite of Occam's Razor, however convoluted, "invoking one mystery to explain another". "None of these alternatives worked unless you were prepared to ignore masses of inconvenient data, or distort the evidence in order to make it confirm your bias," he writes.

Rather than the ETH, Clarke goes for the PSH, or psychosocial hypothesis – by which, he says, "most, though perhaps not all, UFO stories can be explained". This should not, he emphasises, "be confused with debunking of the type associated with Richard Dawkins". PSH looks for social, psychological and cultural factors. It sees ufology as "interesting and worthy of serious study" and "seeks to understand the whole syndrome both as modern folklore and as a myth in the making". Many subscribers to PSH have a background in literature, folklore and anthropology, Peter Brookesmith tells him. "They recognise that essentially we are dealing with 'stories' not data, and they have cultural roots and precedents."

True believers in the ETH will undoubtedly dismiss this fascinating book as a whitewash, even as part of a government cover-up. One would expect nothing less.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

SENSIBLE EXPLORATION OF UFOLOGY AND UFOLOGISTS

9

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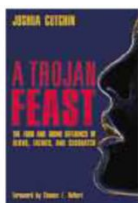
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Otherworldly dining

A modest book about alien/fairy food gifts plunders a vast range of sources without drawing any doctrinaire conclusions



A Trojan Feast

The Food and Drink Offerings of Aliens, Faeries, and Sasquatch

Joshua Cutchin

Anomalist Books 2015

Pb, 259pp, bib, ind, \$15.95, ISBN 978-1938398353

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.00

Joshua Cutchin boasts an impressively original concept for a book on anomalies: fortean food.

The subject has been out there in plain sight for as long as forteans have puzzled over accounts of otherworldly encounters, but hardly anybody has paid it much attention, with the notable exception of the controversial Joe Simonton CE3 from 1961, when a Wisconsin man claimed that UFO occupants handed over fresh pancakes in exchange for a jug of water. When analysed, the contents proved disappointingly prosaic, which given Simonton's manifest sincerity – the sort of complication that makes the anomalist's life so interesting; vexing, anyway – did not quite close the matter. Then again, if you insist that every question has an answer and every door is there to be shut, you aren't a fortean.

Cutchin, whose first book this is, is a fortean in the fullest and finest sense. He has ideas, and they're creative and provocative ones, but he doesn't insist they're certainly, or even probably, true. He thinks the entities in these narratives are in some sense "real" but that our perceptions of them are filtered through culture. Most forteans these days hold to some version of that hypothesis, but he is among the first to imagine that the food allegedly

consumed in these alleged encounters is a drug akin to DMT, able to alter brain molecules and manipulate the senses. "In order to facilitate these changes in neural chemistry," he proposes, "these entities often draw upon the human race's rich symbolism of food and drink, offering 'food mirages' which elicit a change in consciousness in the observer. These simulacra are directly projected into the mind, an extension of the entity itself... and are used to initiate, strengthen, sustain, or – most commonly – end an encounter."

While I have no opinion on the soundness of the proposition, I appreciate the modesty with which Cutchin advances it. You can read *A Trojan Feast* with enjoyment and respect even if you reject the theory as daft.

What Cutchin has done is to survey a fairly staggering range of literature on folklore, anthropology, food science, psychedelics, ufology, and cryptozoology, seeking people's claims to have consumed something – food, liquid, pills – in the course of an extraordinary encounter. He opens with a chapter on the food taboo in fairylore, then moves on to Sasquatch cases. Most of the rest concentrates on CE3s, abductions, and hallucinogenic visions.

I hadn't run into the term 'habituation' before (evidently I've fallen behind in my esoteric reading), but I learn it's employed to characterise instances in which people, ordinarily owners of remote rural property, tell of engaging in some kind of relationship with a resident Sasquatch family, usually expressed through exchanges of items such as food. (Yes, I know. Surpasses my threshold, too, though I'm not sure why, considering all those other anomalies we forteans happily embrace.) Believable or otherwise aside, the Sasquatch seems out

of place, since even in the most outlandish reports the creatures do not act as if operating beyond an animal level of intelligence, unlike those supremely clever fairies, UFO abductors, or Mescalito equivalents.

In his immersion in these uncharted waters, Cutchin uncovers a number of what he takes to be patterns (though I doubt he would argue too vigorously if you took them to be random coincidences; who knows?). He observes: "Taken at face value, the foods involved in entity food cases correspond to a lacto vegetarian diet ... a plant-based food regimen that incorporates dairy products." Tracing varieties of this diet back to ancient Indian religious practices, he says they are traditionally associated with clairvoyance and visionary experience. The thread seems a little thin here, but Cutchin does not insist on its strength. The arguments are put out there solely as thought stimulants. If nothing else, after reading the book you'll never think of entity encounters in quite the same way.

Fortean folklorist Thomas E Bullard provides the foreword, written with his characteristic wit. "The usual efforts to understand the high-strangeness aspects of anomalies," he remarks wryly, "typically begin with enthusiasm, only to end in exhaustion and confusion, the inquirer led astray and mired down much like the traditional victim of mischievous fairies." Unusually, Cutchin keeps his head secured in a keen fortean appreciation of uncertainty and ambiguity, not to mention the likelihood that these phenomena are way beyond our understanding.

A splendid job all around.

Jerome Clark

Fortean Times Verdict

LEVELHEADED LOOK AT SOME FORTEAN FOODSTUFFS

8

The Penguin Book of Witches

Ed: Katherine Howe

Penguin 2014

Pb, 294pp, illus, bib, ind, £9.98, ISBN 9780143106180

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.49



This insightful collection of accounts of witchcraft ranging from a manual for witch hunting written by King James I in 1597 to court documents from the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692, edited by Katherine Howe, is a chilling introduction into the paranoia that swept England and colonial America in the early modern era.

Howe, a direct descendent of two accused Salem witches and the author of the bestselling novel *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane*, is perfectly placed to bring to life accounts such as that of Eunice Cole, who was tried for throwing a rock at a nine-year-old girl after the child had refused to go and live with her. Cole was imprisoned and after her death buried with a stake in her heart. Another account showing that accused witches didn't always end up on the wrong side of the courts involves Jane James, a Boston woman who was so frequently accused of witchcraft that she took her accusers to court for slander.

Well organised with illuminating annotations, *The Penguin Book of Witches* demonstrates how witchcraft was a crucial marker of the boundaries of normality in the early modern era and not just a mediaeval superstition that led to the deaths of thousands of innocent women from the 1500s to the 1700s.

The 294 pages are more than just a simple narration of the chronological events.

In this book Howe also explains the reasons why in colonial America perfectly literate and intelligent men and women not only believed in witches but were prepared to put them to death as recently as the 18th century.

Richard Thomas

Fortean Times Verdict

CONCISE AND WELL-REFERENCED LOOK AT A CENTURY OF WITCHES

8

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

The Improbable Primate

Clive Finlayson

OUP 2014

Hb, 202pp, illus, notes, ind, £16.99, ISBN 9780199658784

Finlayson covers two of the most important debates in current hominology: how many species of *Homo sapiens* were there, and what made our ancestors break away so distinctively from other primates. He argues for the 'multiregional' transformation of a single human species which adapted to different types of environment. Each of these adaptations, he says, is a solution to the problem of finding water over a period of 1.8 million years of a drying climate. The different water-habitats provided different plants and animals that shaped their hunting and gathering; and these differences in diet and technology, in turn, shaped their adaptations. The second issue is the cross-breeding with more ancient forms of humans which, where offspring were viable, also shaped the adaptations. The presence of (particularly) Neandertal and Denisovan genomes in the modern human lineage makes it difficult to establish clearly any indications of any separate human species.

The Exodus Reality

Scott Alan Roberts & John Richard Ward

New Page Books 2014

Pb, 286pp, illus, colour plates, notes, bib, index, \$19.99, ISBN 9781601632913

This "real" history of Moses proposes two possibilities for the identity of Moses: Amenhotep (grand vizier, chief of works and the armies, and royal steward to Amenhotep III), and Senenmut (a royal prince and lover of Hatshepsut). Both theories are argued well as the authors re-interpret ambiguous inscriptions and documents concerning Moses, the 'Pharaoh's daughter' who fished him from the river, the flight from Egypt and the sojourn of the Israelites in Sinai. A thought-provoking read.

Conversations with History

Susan Lander

Hay House 2014

Pb, 231pp, £12.99, ISBN 9781781803325

Rather than being a volume of dialogues with figures from the past, once a common method of presenting philosophical or political discourse, these are the outpourings of an American lawyer turned medium. Her choice of channelling is eclectic, with subjects ranging from Charlemagne, Ben Franklin and Gandhi to Kurt Vonnegut, Steve Jobs and Notorious B.I.G. *Caveat* whatever!

Preparing For Contact

George Michael

RVP Press 2014

Pb, 373pp, bib, refs, \$18.95, ISBN 9781618613226

The debate on extraterrestrial life is classically divided between the astronomers, exobiologists and other scientists on the one hand; and on the other, those who believe that ET not only exist but have visited Earth, perhaps even regularly (a group encompassing believers in UFOs, Ancient Astronauts, Contactees and Abductees). Michael attempts to bridge these camps, providing first a broad history of the debate; then a report on the state of the scientific search for extraterrestrial intelligence; and thirdly a fair overview of the evidence for alien contact and visitation. Another chapter (arguably the most interesting) examines fictional reactions to alien contact and invasion and compares them what we know of existing governmental plans and strategies for First Contact, including attempts to draft 'meta-law' frameworks for future treaties and concords. The book closes discussing human options for what John Wyndham called the 'outward urge', when Earthlings settle on other planets or themselves make First Contact with aliens.

This is a densely written book, crammed with ideas and infor-

mation; a pity, then, that after 90 pages of notes there were blank pages that could have had a useful index.

Aha!

William B Irvine

OUP 2015

Hb, 352pp, notes, bib, ind, \$24.95, ISBN 9780199338870

Irvine explores that moment when a new idea or understanding is, literally, realised. Chapters are devoted to breakthrough moments in religion, morality, science, maths (including code-breaking) and art (including music), each epiphany taking a slightly different form and

having different impacts personally, socially and on the currently dominant intellectual paradigm. The process of conscious observations and unconscious dreaming is followed down into the subconscious realm, from whose depths these moments seem to bubble upwards, referring to the latest discoveries in genetics, neurology and evolutionary psychology.

Though the subject is complex and difficult at times, Irvine writes with clarity, erudition and, yes, insight, as he draws on a wide range of examples, both modern and historical. Fascinating and instructive.

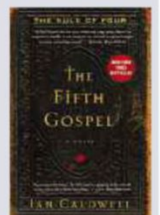
FORTEAN FICTION

The Fifth Gospel

Ian Caldwell

Simon & Schuster

Hb, 431pp, £14.99, ISBN 9781471111020



It's 2004, and we're close to the end of John Paul II's papacy. Days before a controversial exhibition is due to open at the Vatican, the curator dies violently. A young Roman Catholic priest, Fr Simon Andreou, faces a canonical trial, accused of his murder. He is the brother of the narrator, Fr Alex Andreou, an Eastern Catholic priest who lives in the Vatican with his five-year-old son. Fr Simon refuses to speak in his own defence, so his brother investigates how and why the curator died, and what the great secret is about the exhibition – which includes the Turin Shroud and the Diatesseron, the "fifth Gospel" of the title, actually a second-century attempt to merge the four canonical Gospels into one.

This may sound like a Dan Brown novel, but it's of immeasurably higher quality. Although the mystery and the tension mount inexorably throughout the story, there's none of the cheap end-of-chapter cliffhangers beloved of hack thriller writers. Everything in *The Fifth Gospel* rings true because Ian Caldwell (again unlike Brown!) spent 10 years researching and writing the novel, his first since co-authoring *The Rule of Four*, a complex, multi-layered thriller investigating an allegorical Renaissance work, the *Hyperotomachia Poliphili*.

Many readers may be shocked by the politicking and in-fighting between Vatican departments, and the dirty tricks they pull – including one powerful cardinal deliberately subverting Pope John Paul's overtures to the Orthodox Church. As Fr Alex says of the Vatican Secretariat of State: "The motto here is that a new door opens every time you push another man out a window." This is a novel of betrayals and cover-ups, but mostly of sacrifice, of commitment and of love, with believable characters, twists and turns of story and a fascinating theological rationale – the clash between New Testament scholarship and faith is central to the plot. This, Dan Brown, is how it should be done.

David V Barrett

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.



A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night

Dir Ana Lily Amirpour, US 2014
On UK release from 22 May

A big hit at last year's Sundance Film Festival, *A Girl Walks Home Alone* is being promoted as "the first Iranian vampire Western". That's something of a fib really, since it's neither Iranian nor a Western; it's not even the first vampire Western. However, it is one of the most individual films I've seen in the last few years. It's self-consciously cool and at times frustratingly oblique, but the way it plays with genre conventions and audience expectations is remarkable, especially for a tyro director like Ana Lily Amirpour.

So while it isn't truly a Western, it is set in a place called Bad City, a deadbeat Iranian (although filmed in California) town into which intrudes a stranger (Sheila Vand) who may be an avenging angel or an angel of death – a kind of Woman with No Name. Neither is it truly a horror film: there is a vampire, that much is true, and she does provoke two scenes of unsettling power, but the film employs few of the genre's visual tropes – there are no coffins, stakes or garlic here. More than either of these, then, it is simply a film about relationships – primarily the broken one between young James

Dean wannabe Arash (Arash Mardi) and his junkie father (Marshall Manesh), and later between Arash and the mysterious girl of the film's title. She is no ordinary vampire: when she's not chowing down on the local crime lord she enjoys nothing more than kicking back in her flat listening to 80s pop records. Indeed, the tentative romance she strikes up with Arash could easily be from a John Hughes movie.

The film is also visually reminiscent of Jim Jarmusch's *Down by Law* and David Lynch's *Eraserhead*, and there's a Tarantino influence in the pop culture references, striking use of contemporary music and sporadic outbreaks of bloodletting. Amirpour's film is based on two comic books she had created previously and which concern the same characters; the film's beautiful black and white framings (shot by Lyle Vincent) are indeed reminiscent of comic panels, in much the same way as the Sin City films were designed to echo their printed forebears.

The influences are clear, then, but Amirpour creates something fresh with them by refusing to nail her film to any particular mast and wrong-footing the audience just when they think they know where it's going: this starts out as an off-kilter crime story, morphs into a vampire tale, then a teen flick, then a comedy, then a family drama and then a romance. It's hard to summa-

rise a film that contains a scene of a drug dealer beating up a prostitute and one featuring a skateboarding vampire. It's not wholly successful: it meanders somewhat and there are a few too many stylish but redundant shots for its own good; but it'll stick in your mind and I guarantee you won't see anything else like it this year.

Daniel King

Fortean Times Verdict

STYLISH, BIZARRE AND ODDLY ENDEARING

7

Second Coming

Dir debbie tucker green, UK 2014
On UK release from 5 June

So here's a thing. You haven't had sex with your partner for quite a while. You haven't slept with anyone else. But somehow you end up being pregnant. Now, what's that all about?

That, in a nutshell, is the story of *Second Coming*, a 2014 film directed by playwright and director debbie tucker green. (Shome mishtake shurely? No, she insists it's all lower case.) It's a family psychodrama that looks at the repercussions of a seemingly inexplicable pregnancy and stars Idris Elba as sometimes irascible husband Mark and Nadine Marshall (doing a fine job) as his bemused expectant wife Jax. Eleven-year-old son JJ is played in a happily understated way by Kai

Francis Lewis.

tucker green's style is languid, to say the least, her actors having to work with close-ups that linger quite a bit longer than the norm. This and the minimal plot may make some viewers wish they'd all just get on with it. The sparse amount of information doled out via dialogue holds one's interest and heightens the suspense, though, and certain scenes involving Jax in a wet and windy bathroom provide a welcome jolt. Tucker green is adept at sketching realistic family scenes. She inserts touches of humour and warmth amongst the shouting matches, and the three principal actors work very well as a team to bring these scenes to life.

Does the mysterious pregnancy make this an *Omen* or a *Jesus of Nazareth*? That would be telling. It's a film that may provoke some slight impatience, but it's worth seeing through to the end.

Julie McNamee

Fortean Times Verdict

SLOW-MOVING, BUT WORTH STICKING WITH TILL THE END

6

Moondial

Dir Colin Cant, UK 1988
Second Sight, £14.99 DVD

It's a delight to see the original version of the 1988 BBC children's series *Moondial* on DVD at last.

With her mother in a coma after a car accident, 13-year-old Minty (Siri Neal) stays with a great-aunt (Valerie Lush) out in the country – a stylised start to many children's stories. But *Moondial* is better than most; it is a beautifully crafted ghost/time-travel story, based on the novel by Helen Cresswell (*Lizzie Dripping*, *The Bagthorpe Saga* etc).

The series was filmed on location at Belton House in Lincolnshire; the house and gardens are integral to the whole story. Minty finds that when moonlight falls on a sundial in the gardens she is taken back in time to meet a tubercular Victorian kitchen boy who is abused by the other kitchen staff; each thinks the other is a ghost until they reach out to shake hands at the end of the first episode. They also see an 18th-century girl with a strawberry birthmark on her face who is called Devil's Child both by other children and by her cruel governess, Miss

Vole (Jacqueline Pearce – Servalan in *Blake's Seven* – who also plays the arrogant present-day ghost-hunter Miss Raven). An old man living by the mansion, World (Arthur Hewlett – *Quatermass and the Pit*, *The Avengers* and much more), tells Minty that she is the key to releasing the unhappy children, whom he has been aware of all his life.

The bullying cruelty of children in a mob to a child on her own because she is in some way different from them, and the more conscious cruelty of a powerful adult to a vulnerable child, are at the heart of the story, but not in any preachy way. Instead the focus is on Minty's kindness, courage and determination to overcome unfairness – superbly portrayed by Siri Neal.

There are some excellent special effects, including the kaleidoscope-like aerial view of the sundial spinning around as Minty is drawn into the past, and the simpler but chillingly effective change of light and blowing of Minty's hair each time she passes by a small gravestone in the churchyard.

A shortened "movie edit" of *Moondial* was released some years ago, but this is the first time the original six-episode version has been widely available on DVD. Features include interviews with both Siri Neal and director Colin Cant (*Grange Hill*, *Dark Season*, *Century Falls*), who also provide joint commentaries on two of the episodes. Although Siri Neal has appeared in a few other TV dramas, including a *Lovejoy* two-parter, neither she nor the other child actors went on to pursue an acting career.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

WELCOME RELEASE FOR CLASSIC CHILDREN'S SERIES

9

Jupiter Ascending

Dir The Wachowskis, US/UK 2015

Warner Home Video, £12.99 DVD, £15.99 (Blu-ray)

Not since Randy Lerner ploughed a third of a billion pounds into Aston Villa has so much money been spent on producing so little. Andy and Lana Wachowski have been floundering around in search of a big hit movie since *The Matrix Revolutions*, and even that wasn't much cop. In this, their latest film, there is clear desperation in the mixture of brain-scrambling visuals and brain-rotting script.

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com; @revpeterlaws)

SOCIETY

Dir Bryan Yuzna, US 1989
Arrow Video, £19.99 (Dual Format)

High school jock Bill Whitney's got everything: the new Jeep, the cheerleader girlfriend, the wealthy Beverley Hills family. He's also got the ubiquitous angst that all teenagers tend to suffer, rich or poor, though his worries are a little more intense than most: he doesn't just think his parents and sister misunderstand him, he's genuinely afraid of them. When he hears a secret tape recording of their antics he realises that there really is something off-message about this particular all-American family. There's more too: he's catching strange half-glimpses of contorted bodies or apples infested with worms; and why are his mum and dad so very interested in cultivating the slugs in their garden? In time, he's flung headlong into the grotesque surrealism of a community of privilege, obsessed with something called 'The Shunt'.

Like *The Stepford Wives* before it, *Society* wants to yank the mask off apparently happy and successful communities and reveal the twisted morality

beneath. With much talk of class and 'knowing your station', it's as much Marxist horror tract as classic 80s latex fest. The title sequence alone sets the squelchy political tone, with slime-covered bodies writhing in slo-mo, while the Eton Boating Song plays over the visuals. It's an inspired soundtrack choice from director Bryan Yuzna, who has made a career out of the morphing, murdering and melding of the human body. Yet as well as the clear political subtext to the story (is this what the Illuminati get up to behind closed doors?) there's the running theme of isolation too. Bill's plight might be extreme, but ironically it's the journey of many teenagers. There's that creeping sense that you might be a bit different from the people around you, and with that comes a scary sense of loneliness.

The film is best remembered for its outrageous finale, which plays like a late-80s soft porn film crossed with a Bosch painting. It's lost none of its power to shock, and while some viewers might find the lead up to it a tad plodding and even repetitive, the actual conclusion is a scene you will never really un-see.



Arrow's new HD restoration looks magnificent, with an excellent set of extras. The actors share the same mystified delight as the audience does. In interviews, they keep chuckling nervously saying: "Yeah, it's a pretty weird movie isn't it?" The director admits that the film's a little clunky in parts, and he's right. At times, it even feels like a TV movie (until the end... where it *really* doesn't). Yet while Yuzna's ultimate Body Politic movie is a bizarre, patchy and quite frankly disgusting vision, it's as relevant and as hand-over-the-mouth shocking as ever.

Fortean Times Verdict

BLACKLY COMIC BODY HORROR RETAINS ITS POWER TO SHOCK

8



The story concerns one Jupiter Jones (Mila Kunis) – your suspicions should be raised immediately by that awful contrived name – a cleaning lady in Chicago. It turns out that she is actually royalty, a genetic mirror image of the late matriarch of the ruling house of Abrasax on Jupiter. As such she is heir to planet Earth, which is an invaluable resource, being the major producer of a serum that allows Jupiterians to live in a state of perpetual youth.

The three siblings fighting for their mother's inheritance – Balem (Eddie Redmayne), Titus (Douglas Booth) and Kalique (Tuppence Middleton) – realise that Jones blocks their path to control over the serum and pull out all the stops to remove her. Balem sends agents to kill her, but Titus hires bounty hunter Caine Wise (Channing Tatum) to bring her to House Abrasax. When Wise finds her in Chicago he soon realises that she is a pawn in a greater game and must protect her at all costs, and to do so he enlists the help of old friend Stinger (Sean Bean).

I make no apologies for the length and tedium of that brief synopsis. The first half of this two-hour-plus movie is almost entirely given over to exposition as the intricacies of the unnecessarily convoluted plot (and background lore) are laboriously explained. Essentially it comes down to an unholy brew of *Star Wars*, *Dune*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Terminator* and a dozen other titles. Randomly chucked into the plot are: dinosaur henchmen; sentient bees; Gollum-like servitors; and Stormtrooper/Cylon guards. Naturally, we also get lots of silly names for all these things: 'Keepers', 'The Void', 'Aegis'... you know the kind of thing.

One new (to me anyway) element is the idea of genetically spliced creations – that is to say, human DNA cut with that of various animals to create all sorts of hybrids for specific roles. Caine Wise is half human, half wolf; Stinger is half human, half bee (Monty Python fans stop giggling at the back); and a minor character called Famulus who is half human, half deer. The possibilities of this idea are endless, but in practice are not followed through. Caine's wolf DNA allows him over-developed canines, pointy ears and an ability to sniff the air occasionally, but so much more could have been made of this idea beyond mere

window dressing. He seems to rely mostly on his gadgets, foremost of which are his anti-gravity boots. These allow him to ice skate just above the ground, surf through the air, blow things up and pretty much anything else the directors need him to do. He also has a variety of enormous guns, but no one makes any effort to explain what they are or how they work, probably because their function is simply to blast people from one side of the screen to the other because *It Looks Good*.

The script is a total mess. To wit, the opening pre-credits sequence: an astrologer falls in love with a Russian woman, sets up a life with her, gets her pregnant (they name the baby Jupiter while it's still in the womb) and is then shot dead by extremely well organised home invaders. Jupiter's mum then boards a ship to America in search of a new and better life and gives birth while she's on board. All that takes about two minutes and is jaw-dropping – but not in a good way. The rest of it is just as bad: banal, structurally messy, riddled with holes, full of inconsequential characters who come and go, and in some cases disappear completely. All manner of *dei ex machina* are invoked in an attempt to cover up some of these problems: for instance, after a show-down with some aliens results in the destruction of half of downtown Chicago, we're told that the authorities won't find out because it will all be rebuilt within 24 hours. If this film was a computer game – and it almost is, so reliant is it on CGI – then the consensus would be that it is broken and requires immediate patching to render it playable.

It would be unfair of me not to mention some of the breathtaking visuals, particularly the vistas of deep space, Jupiter, and vast spaceships disappearing through stargates. The action sequences too are undeniably exciting, too, but they are so busy and cluttered and so fast that at times it's difficult to tell what you're actually seeing. At least you can marvel at the wizardry of modern cinema; but the lesson of a film like *Jupiter Ascending* is that marvels alone are not, and never have been, enough..

Daniel King

Fortean Times Verdict

OVERBLOWN AND UNDERCOOKED CGI-FEST

5

THE REV'S SCARY SHORTS

DISCOPATH

Metrodome, £9.99 (DVD)



On paper, Renaud Gauthier's arthouse horror sounds like a comedy sketch: it's 1976 and young burger-flipper Duane turns psychotic when he hears the hip new sound of Disco. What you get, however, is a fun bi-lingual slasher that's very strange, and both well made and horribly distasteful. The period feel is convincing enough to give a cool John Carpenter/Brian De Palma vibe. Yet it all ends too abruptly and there's a coldness and cruelty that can leave a bad taste. Still, Gauthier's a talent and as one might expect, the soundtrack to this is superb... or should I say killer. **Rev Peter Laws 5/10**

WYRMWOOD

Studiocanal, £9.99 (DVD), £12.99 (Blu-ray)



Just when you thought nobody was making zombie movies anymore, along comes yet another undead apocalypse. At least this one's pumped with wit and wild energy. Described as *Mad Max* meets *Dawn of the Dead*, it's about a man battling zombie hordes while searching for his sister (she'd been experimented on by a mad, Steampunk scientist, in case you were wondering). The first few minutes of ropery CGI headshot gore left me groaning; but give it time and you're thrown into a high-octane treat with some surprisingly thoughtful ideas at its heart. Oh, and it turns out that cars can run on zombie blood. Who knew? **Rev PL 7/10**

THE ASYLUM

Studiocanal, £9.99 (DVD)



Teenagers party in an abandoned asylum, then tick the ubiquitous paranormal box by levitating a young kid who looks like the drummer from that 90s band Hansen. Almost immediately, he's possessed and everything goes all *Evil Dead* for an hour. It's sparky enough, with some amusing dialogue, but it's a confused affair with some annoying characters. Another in a long line of horror DVDs to fill the shelf of Tesco, (sporting the same bluey-grey cover they all seem to have), though the combo of gore and the spooky setting might be a hit with some who choose to chuck it in their shopping basket. **Rev PL 4/10**

TWISTED TALES

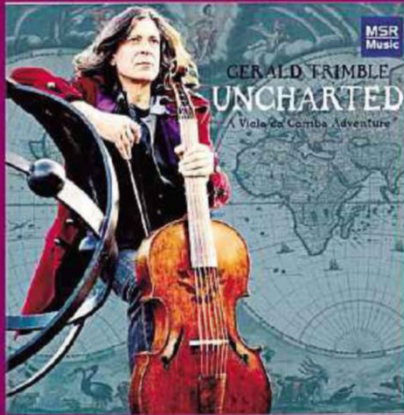
Bulldog Films, £12.99 (DVD)



Here's a horror anthology, originally broadcast as a web series, and boy does it show. Camera quality varies, the dubbing's occasionally out, the special effects (particularly the freeze frame CGI blood spurts) might even make you guffaw. Yet some of the stories do have an intriguing hook: like the friends who summon a demon seconds before the Pizza Guy turns up. Is he the demonic imp they asked for? Stuff like this is fun and *Twilight Zone*-y, but the weaker segments (the pointless 'Vampire Night') drag the others down. *Fright Night* and *Childs Play* scribe Tom Holland deserves props for some cool ideas, but at 144 minutes, the weaker segments could have been culled to leave a stronger movie. **Rev PL 5/10**

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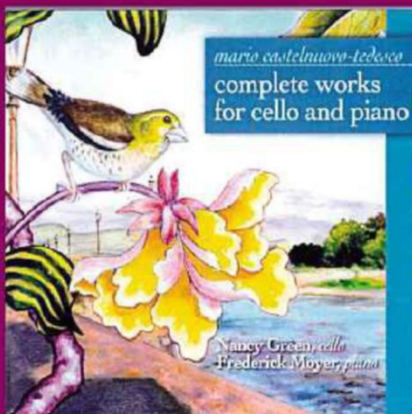
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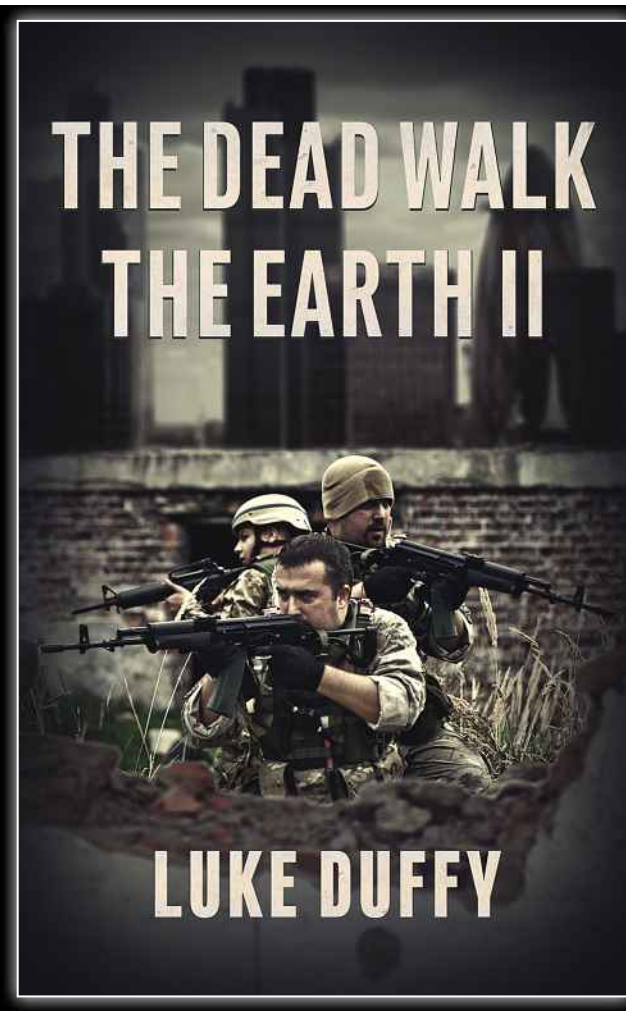



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THE EARTH II**



LUKE DUFFY

The mainland is lost, conquered by the armies of walking dead that now roam the earth, consuming all in their path as they spread like a black plague through the wasteland that had once been civilisation. As the remains of the human race retreat to the islands, clinging to them like life rafts in an ocean of terror, the ravenous monsters, the evil shadows of humanity, become the dominant species on the planet. Disease, famine, and death begin to spread through the cramped refugee camps, threatening the continued existence of the living and forcing the remnants of the government and armed forces to begin an offensive that would recapture the ground that they have lost to the infected hordes. The survivors of the team, finding themselves placed at the spearhead of the great counterstrike, are given a special mission that would help tip the scales against their rotting enemy. Now they must fight for the entire world.

Dear FT...

letters



No tinfoil hats

In his review of *The Bilderbergers – Puppet-Masters of Power* [FT327:59], Noel Rooney exaggerates the mystery surrounding both the group and its co-founder, Joseph Retinger. A biography of Retinger (*Joseph Retinger: Memoirs of an Eminence Grise*) was published in 1972 by the University of Sussex, which included a short chapter on his work for Bilderberg. As for the group itself, in the last five years the minutes of many of its annual meetings have been leaked – my guess would be by Bilderberg itself – and can be read on-line. And they are about as dull as any set of minutes of meetings would be when the names of the participants are missing. Tinfoil hats are not required for Bilderberg. It is a real group with some influence; how much influence remains unclear.

Robin Ramsay

By email

Digital oscillators

The feature on 'Rogue Oscillators' [FT327:38-44] was interesting to an amateur radio enthusiast like me. The radios mentioned were of the regenerative type and the high frequency feedback to add gain was retransmitted via the antenna if not controlled correctly. With correct filtering and a redesigned front end it could have been reduced. These types of radios make for a simple and cheap way to build a radio receiver and there are many transistorised versions of them built today by amateurs. It must have been a problem in the early days of radio, causing interference until the superheterodyne principle of reception was developed. However, many radio receivers have to have oscillators unless you return to the simplest type of receiver known as a crystal set.

It is ironic that radio hams (as they are now commonly known) developed these receivers including the superheterodyne, but whilst the rogue oscillators are virtually all gone, the biggest and



Bosky mystery

In October 2014 I visited Castle Caldwell in Northern Ireland and took this photograph in a forest around the ruined castle. When I looked at my photographs later, this one appeared odd – the tree towards the middle of the photo seems to have some kind of white light behind or around it, something I hadn't noticed at the time. What could it be? I have not altered or enhanced the photo in any way.

David Burn, Bangor, Northern Ireland

far worse interference is caused by the rogue digital 'oscillators'. Many of these dreadful plug in switch mode power supplies are from Far East manufacturers. The buzz, whines and general whizzing noise emitted by these millions of power supplies have all but drowned out the reception of far distant radio hams from across the world and are ruining ham radio. These devices, which include some TV's and computers, should be filtered at certain frequencies. Ofcom, the radio regulatory authority, is starting to take notice and as time goes on there will be penalties and prosecutions for the

far worse interference is caused by the rogue digital 'oscillators'. Even BT at one time was distributing plug-in power supplies that were emitting RFI or radio frequency interference. Radio hams have had to take a series of exams and pay to get their licenses, and I feel the problem needs to be addressed, especially as the security agencies such as GCHQ are being interfered with.

Digital switch mode is a cheap way to build lightweight power supplies and chargers, but they can be built in such a way as to reduce their radio frequency interference. The old rogue oscillators caused far less interference

than today's general public pumping out RFI from digital devices. Often the problem is cheap Far Eastern imports, which are also a fire hazard.

Roderick Williams

Talgarth, Powys

Plant wonders

I recently discovered an article in *Nexus* magazine, "The Lost Language of the Plant Kingdom" by Stephen Harrod Buhner, taken from the website gaianstudies.org. Plants are amazing chemists that, for instance when attacked by parasites, can make a chemical whose odour attracts the right predator to eat the parasites, and their repertoire is broad enough to handle all possible cases. (Spider mites are one type of parasite Buhner mentions as dealt with in this fashion). Plants can also increase the temperature of their flowers to "increase the volatilization of their aromatic compounds into the air", to attract pollinators when the pollen is ripe.

What this and similarly astonishing yet true stories from the kingdoms of Life could be said to mean is that the modern science-based world view is impoverished by being heavily tilted towards physics and astronomy, whose undeniable importance lies to a great extent in the fact that Nature's constants are seemingly fine-tuned to support the existence of living things, whose complexity and wonder surpasses by orders of magnitude those large-scale phenomena – like the comet that crashed into Jupiter – that receive (by at least an order of magnitude) the greater share of publicity.

Meanwhile, that form of ignorance goes hand in hand with what Naomi Klein in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate* refers to as the prioritisation of profits over people, along with the seemingly deathless 'zombie' philosophy of unchecked economic growth at all costs – costs that soon may have to be paid.

Richard Porter

Denver, Colorado

Fish fall on film

Some time ago I wrote about the writer John McPhee and his book *Basin and Range*. Now I've got round to reading my other book by him, *Encounters with the Archdruid* (1971), about the US conservationist David Brower. Both books are fabulous and highly recommended. Sadly, there were no UFOs in this one, but I can't resist quoting his description of a real, honest-to-God fish fall. McPhee is watching a film of Lake Powell, a gigantic water reservoir in Colorado, with dam builder extraordinaire Floyd Dominy, who died in 2014, aged 101:

"There were more scenes of the blue, still water, lapping at high sandstone cliffs – panoramic vistas of the reservoir. An airplane now appeared over the lake – twin engine, cargo. 'Watch this,' Dominy said. 'Just watch this.' What appeared to be a contrail paid out behind the plane – a long, cloudy sleeve that widened in the air. 'Trout!' Dominy said. 'Trout! Those are fingerling trout. That's how we put them in the lake.'"

Maybe there's a connection between chemtrails and fish falls, and those waterspouts were nothing but red herrings after all?

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

The wheel of life

I was pleased to read Nils Erik Grande's recent letter about reincarnation [FT322:70] as he and I

have a few things in common with regard to that subject: an early exposure to the concept, the fervent promulgation of the doctrine to our peers (and their somewhat less enthusiastic reception of it), and its subsequent relegation to the 'interesting possibility' box.

Most pleasing of all, Nils shares my openness to the notion that one's various incarnations may skip around through time and even overlap. Your next incarnation could be as one of your own parents, for example. Although these two lives appear to be running alongside each other in the physical realm, the soul experiences life as one of them and then as the other. Paradoxical as it may at first seem, it makes sense in terms of the soul's supposed mission of increasing its understanding and compassion, and only feels odd if you expect the soul's realm to be governed by our physical laws of time – but why should it be?

Even if you fall short of buying it, it can be a truly mind-opening idea and may lead to a recognition of the oneness of all life, whereupon the belief that each of us has an individual soul might give way to a preference for some collective 'soul stuff' that finds physical manifestation in everything that lives – and perhaps in the inanimate too. Thus the contemplation of reincarnation freed from linear time draws one almost inexorably to the concept mentioned by Nils that a single soul is continually being

reborn until it has experienced itself through every organism that ever lives. Furthermore, if the soul is not subject to the rules of time that prevail in our physical realm, then it can't really be said that it experiences its various incarnations in sequence; rather it must be doing the whole lot at once – in one instant, even. Therefore the entire Universe is but a momentary excursion of Soul, or God, if you prefer. (Parallels here

with current cosmology are pretty irresistible and well worth considering.) We transient vessels get to spend time here on behalf of the One Soul for whom time doesn't exist, so have a good look around and make the most of it! Like Nils, I don't profess to know what really happens, but I'm quite sure I'll enjoy thinking about it for the rest of my life (or lives).

Rob Bray
Old Stratford, Northamptonshire



Fortean Rock

Although the subject pops up occasionally, how wonderful it was to read the two recent letters discussing connections between fortean phenomena and both the Doors and Marilyn Manson [FT325:70,72]. While the links between music and those topics we might consider 'out there' are numerous, are there any truly contemporary artists troubling the airwaves with their fortean rock? Perhaps even David Bowie with his Kirlian photography and encounters with Venusians might be viewed passé.

Well, I'd like to throw my own hat into the ring on that score. My merry band of musicians, Silvery (pictured above), have so far released three albums since 2008 on the much respected Blow Up label with very fortean subjects at the core of our slightly punk, slightly prog and very English 1974 inspired Glam Rock.

Hell-bent on reclaiming fortean songs (about 1920s Spiritualism, ghosts-as-time-travellers-from-the-future, hauntings at the Vauxhall plague pit, mer-men, those 'vast revolving wheels of light under the ocean', the protocol of naming new stars, the lost rivers of London, expeditions into the Hollow Earth, and even ritual suicide in the Aokigahara Forest) from the – for want of a

better word – 'novelty' circuit. We even included Fort's *New Lands* in the bibliography of one album. Indeed, I don't know what's more impressive, a rock album having a bibliography in the CD booklet, or getting away with receiving copious amounts of airplay on your favourite BBC radio stations with songs tackling the psychogeography of our fair capital, Lewy Body dementia and extinct diesel locomotives. Naturally, all delivered straight-faced with stage wear ranging from Victorian bandsman uniforms, through sailor gear to dinner suits and Musketeer finery. It usually makes sense.

And here's a *Fortean Times* exclusive for you: our next album (number 4 – out hopefully before the end of Summer 2015) is a musical romp through the adventure of Temporal Agent and Art Bell Forum contributor John Titor. Imagine his quest to locate an IBM 5100 from 1975 presented as if Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds* were played by Sparks and The Spiders From Mars. Naturally in our take on the story he visits London in 2006 and gets slightly side-tracked by one of the more esoteric new bands. I can't think who that might be.

So are we the first Post-Jon Downes / Reverend Lionel Fanthorpe 'Amphibians From Outer Space' fortean rock band? In the words of Dr Frank N Furter, you better believe it baby.

Most of the Silvery back catalogue is available to browse via Bandcamp: <http://silvery.bandcamp.com/>
James Orman
London

Murnau's end

German expressionist director FW Murnau – featured in "The Vampire & The Occultist" by Brian J Robb [FT326:30-36] – merits his own entry in FT's 'Strange Deaths' column. The director of *Nosferatu* was killed in a car accident in Los Angeles in 1931 while he fellated his Filipino houseboy, whom he allowed to drive his limousine while he crouched on the floor of the vehicle. <http://pinoy-comics-tv-movies.blogspot.com/2010/01/filipino-boy-and-death-of-murnau.html>

Greg May
Orlando, Florida



Fomenting folk tale

There is something I've been meaning to put on record for some time and was reminded of on a weekend in mid-February when I was working with a group of volunteers on the local nature reserve here in Cheshire.

During a break, the conversation turned to local tales of strange occurrences. Several of these involve phantom farm workers and the shades of those who had been unfortunate enough to have been lost on the bleak moors (Daniel Defoe hated the area) and had perished in the mire. As a late friend and colleague (then a countryside ranger) was responsible for making most of these up to entertain visitors, our conversation turned to less familiar stories.

Some 20 years ago the daughter of a friend was keen to relate a local tale that she'd been told by school friends. Charlotte would then have been seven or eight, which made the detail contained within her story all the more fascinating.

The area of housing that fringes the nature reserve at Risley Moss to the east of Warrington, Cheshire, was the site of a vast ordnance factory, built to supply the military in World War II and demolished in the 1970s to provide land for the creation of part of Warrington New Town, specifically Birchwood.

The housing estate at Gorse Covert is encircled by a network of footpaths, meadows, ponds and small woodland, built to a large extent on the rubble that remained from the ordnance factory demolition. This fact means that much of the area in question occupies a somewhat higher elevation than the housing estate and is called, locally, Gorse Covert Mounds.

Charlotte's story concerned a small raised area, perhaps a metre or so above the surrounding meadow and no more than four metres (13ft) in diameter. Two decades ago this vantage point would have commanded views across the farmland to the east,



TOP: Concrete railway sleepers close to a footpath. ABOVE: A grassy knoll in Warrington

toward the industrial complexes at Carrington and Partington and the hills beyond. Today, a belt of trees obscures much of the view but the pathway leading to this small mound is still mown every year, although this is probably just force of municipal habit.

The story goes that if, at a specific time of the evening on a particular date in summer, one stands on this mound, a train (no engine, just coaches) will make its way toward the viewer and stop at the bottom of the hill. The foolish adventurer can then enter one of the coaches and the train will take them away. The destination was unknown but the certainty was that you would never return.

A couple of years ago I mentioned this story to another of our volunteers who has lived locally all his life. He is probably eight or more years younger than Charlotte but he also recalled being told the same story at school. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the tale is its possible origin – although this is pure speculation. There are traces of the old ordnance factory throughout the area, most of them covered by moss, grass and plant life. The most common of these are the remains of the railway lines that criss-crossed the area, serving the factory.

It may be that these tracks planted the seeds of a story in an infant mind back in the 1980s and that the story still circulates. I'm involved in a number of events at the aforementioned nature reserve, many of these involving young people, and there's a temptation to ask if any of the current generation are familiar with the tale. The downside of that is taking the responsibility for encouraging youngsters to venture round mossy embankments in the dark.

And what if it's true? Perhaps, more interestingly for FT readers, it is a possible example of how the smallest of seeds (be they ever in this case slabs of concrete) can grow into local myths.

Andy Pearson
Birchwood, Cheshire

SIMULACRA CORNER

This month, a fine selection of arboreal apparitions.

A. Gary Burrell spotted this pig's face on a tree in his mother's garden.

B. This smiling tree was photographed by Angela Paul in the grounds of Delapre Abbey, Northampton. **C.** A tree person snapped in Dublin's Merrion Square Park by Harry Warren. **D.** A nervous looking tree in Arles, southern France, sent in by (the aptly-named) Keith Wood.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteanimes.com – and please tell us your postal address.



First-hand accounts from *Fortean Times* readers and posters at forum.forteanimes.com

Amnesia

While I always enjoy "Mythconceptions", #186 ["Who am I?" **FT325:23**] got it wrong. Quoting "experts in the field", Mat Coward reported that "amnesiacs never forget who they are". Well, after a motorcycle accident in 1978, that's exactly what *did* happen to me. I woke up in a hospital. I didn't know why I was there. There was a distraught couple sitting next to my bed. I didn't know who they were. *Then*, I realised I didn't know who *I* was. I figured out why I must be in the hospital and who the couple were likely to be. I said, "You're my parents, right?" and my mother burst into tears.

Over the course of the next 36 hours or so, I learned my name and my age (17), but the doctors weren't telling me a lot, apparently wanting to see how much memory came back on its own. Every hour a nurse would come in and ask me what year it was. Unfortunately, the accident occurred over New Year's weekend and the television in the room kept showing clips from old Rose Bowl parades, while the guy in the next bed had had some sort of brain surgery, was wrapped in bandages, and thought it was 1953. So each hour, before answering the nurse, I would debate over whether to believe the TV or the conehead in the next bed.

The strange thing was that I didn't find the experience at all frightening; rather it was fascinating and liberating. It was fascinating because I soon figured out that I still knew impersonal things – like trigonometry, the names of flowers, European history, etc. – but I couldn't remember anything that connected *me* to the rest of the world – like my name, my family, the current President or other current events, what country I was in, etc. Somehow, the informational connection between me and the rest of the world had been turned off. It was liberating because, in having no connections at all, I had no obligations, no baggage from the past, no expectations, no regrets. To this day, I still feel that if I could safely and temporarily replicate the experience, I would do so without hesitation.

After about 36 hours, much of my memory started coming back, but I couldn't remember any of my life before the age of 15 for many years. In my mid-20s, I started remembering things, but I can only remember *that* certain events happened; I can't remember actually doing them or what they felt like. For example, I remember now that my family took a road trip around the American Southwest when I was a kid, but I can't remember seeing anything or what any part of the trip was like. I can't remember any birthday parties, what my room looked like, what my favourite food or TV show was, or many other things that seem common for my friends to remember about their childhood and early teens.

So, yes, people *do* wake up after a bonk on the head asking, "Who am I?"

Donald H Frew
Berkeley, California



Vision before arrival

On 1 November 2014 I was waiting for the bus to Stratford, smoking a cigarette, doing the crossword, sitting on a bench about three yards from the kerb, the occasional vehicle going by, when suddenly, between the top of my newspaper and the brim of my cap, I saw the lower parts of the wheels and bodywork of a red classic car go past. I looked up, but there was no classic car, no red car at all, only a dark grey modern thing.

A few minutes later, after finishing my cigarette, I heard the distinctive sound of a British sports car, and this time when I looked up I saw an approaching (real) red MGB Roadster, about 20 yards away. This particular car is fairly local and I'm familiar with it – I've had to overtake it often enough. So how did I see it go past about five minutes earlier?

Bobby Zodiac
Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire

Dream on

Re 'Hutton's Paradox' [**FT326:71-72**]: when I was very young I had a similar experience to Mr Hutton. I recall lying in the bath watching two rubber ducks floating, when I suddenly had the thought that maybe I was not a human but a duck floating on a stream dreaming that I was human. Years later when I was a teenager some friends and I picked some liberty caps in a cow field and we wondered if the cows were eating the mushrooms whilst grazing (they were particularly belligerent that day). That evening after consuming heroic doses of said fungi we began to contemplate the hilarious (at that moment) thought that maybe we were really cows in a field eating magic mushrooms, and thus dreaming we were humans.

When I was younger I often had lucid dreams in which I displayed an array of powers/abilities like flying and shape-shifting. My dreams were rich in symbolic content like journeys to the underworld and epic battles against the 'forces of dark-

ness'. As a adult I have found that I can induce lucid dreams using a similar method to Mr Hutton: for days I will repeatedly ask myself the question, "Am I awake?" until I find myself asking that question whilst dreaming. In these lucid states I often display uncharacteristic hubris like walking on water or once flying high and summoning lightning that struck me and woke me with a violent jolt.

Paul Whyte
Dublin, Ireland

An ear on the past

As a fey follow-on to Richard George's "Strange music" [**FT323:71**], my own night-side phonetic experiences via chronic hypnagogia have extended into the musical domain with the comforting sounds of male voice choirs on an occasional basis rather than 'perpetual'. I have also heard the eerie, haunting sounds of the Jewish shofar (ram's horn). This is said traditionally to scare off demons. Shalom – and thanks!

Whether my so-called auditory hallucinations are merely my misinterpretation of a hypervigilant acute hearing of earthly ambient noise is for neuropsychiatrists to argue over. It has been said that 'musical hallucinations' are commonly found in people who have suffered hearing loss or deafness and compensate with a memory-based response. Apart from an experience of labyrinthitis (inflammation of the inner ear) 50 years ago, my hearing I consider excellent, nay ethereal. However, a pertinent corollary to all this may be the importance of memory in the auditory hallucination process: my Welsh grandfather was a conductor of male voice choirs and I lived opposite a synagogue for over a decade.

Terry Little
Sherborne, Dorset

Long shot

In the mid 1990s I wanted to get back in touch with a university friend whom I had not spoken to for at least two years and who had been on my mind for some weeks. I believe we should act on these persistent thoughts of people, and so dug out my only contact number for her: her parents' house in Coventry. I spoke to her mother who told me that she had moved to Bristol and said she would let her know I had called.

The next day my old friend did call. I said, "You spoke with your mom then?" There was a puzzled pause, then: "My mom? What do you mean?" I explained that I had phoned her home number just the previous day to ask after her. "No, I haven't spoken with her," she replied. "I just decided to call you and see how you are. We haven't talked for so long." Was it Jung's 'meaningful coincidence' rather than just chance? I felt that we were both thinking of the other for some time prior to actually making the calls, feeding into a 'cosmic database', which we both then picked up on.

Duncan Kaiser
Dubai, UAE

FORTEAN TRAVELLER



101. The International Cryptozoology Museum, Portland, Maine

PAUL ROSS pays a visit to a unique collection devoted to putting the hidden on display and meets its creator, Loren Coleman. Photos by the author.



TEA KRULOS

Cautiously walked the wet streets of downtown Portland, Maine. I was searching for mystery. With 47 inches (1,194mm) of annual rainfall and nearly half as much again in snow, Portland is a green city in every sense: plentiful flora, a commitment to ecological sustainability, and the verdant moss that can grow on you if you don't move fast enough.

Tourists are often surprised that a town with so much precipitation burned down four times. Those conflagrations are commemorated in a city logo, which incorporates a phoenix and the motto *Resurgam* ("I will rise again"). Each resurrection of the city is something not wholly new; just enough of the past is retained for continuity of identity. In its present incarnation, Portland's classic stone buildings are repurposed as quirky and unique shops, and an abundance of bars and restaurants has earned it the title of "Foodiest Small Town in America".¹

But I wasn't looking for a meal.

Tucked away in the proliferation of trendiness is one of the most unusual and mysterious attractions in the city: hugging the bottom floor of a corner building is the International Museum of Cryptozoology.

There's only one museum of its kind in the world, just as there's only one Loren Coleman, its proud founder and owner. Coleman (well-known to readers of this publication) is widely regarded as America's pre-eminent cryptozoologist. He began his lifelong quest for cryptid-related materials as a teenager, and his decades of dedication have resulted in a collection of more than 10,000 objects, which are now housed in the crowded but orderly display. The wealth of information and exhibits is barely contained in the few small rooms of the museum, and visitors who, by design or luck, pass through its portals often spend hours fascinated by Coleman's collection.

ABOVE: Loren Coleman, the museum's proud founder.

The centrepiece of the museum – as well as its most popular feature – is the comprehensive display of films, photos, footprint casts, rare hairs and a massive model of Bigfoot. The materials are designed to make the case for Bigfoot's existence and also to educate visitors about what is actually known about the elusive animal. The museum also features other hairy hominids from around the globe – Yeti, Yowie, Sasquatch, and others. The exhibits are an encounter in themselves, and visitors' faces often light up as they are transported back to their childhoods, the time when they first chanced upon the Big Guys in movies and magazines, on TV, and in sensational headlines.

Coleman traces his own interest in the entire field of cryptozoology to a childhood TV viewing of the 1959 SF-horror film *Half-Human*, which starred a Hollywoodised version of "the Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas". Entranced and ablaze with curiosity, the young Coleman asked his teachers about the mystery cryptid. But they reflected the scientific authority of the time, knew little to nothing about the subject and generally dismissed inquiry. Undaunted, he immediately began reading all the related materials that he could find, and started corresponding – via real, handwritten letters in those pre-Internet days – with cryptozoological writers and researchers worldwide.

In a short time, Coleman amassed a mailing list of more than 400 like-minded individuals, including famed early researcher (and Coleman's personal inspiration) Ivan Sanderson. Alas, Coleman's borderline obsessive interest was not supported at home by his competitively jealous and territorial father, which only motivated and drove him further (echoing the upbringing of Charles Fort). Coleman bought books with money saved from a paper delivery round and hitchhiked to sites of purported cryptozoological sightings and events. His travels, field research, and correspondence led to requests for personal appearances and lectures. He found himself addressing the International Fortean Organization, where members were surprised by the depth of knowledge displayed by such a young man.²

Sadly, Coleman tells me, "Cryptozoology did not pay the bills" and in order to do so, he earned a degree and was employed in the field of psychiatric social work. He later undertook studies at the University of New Hampshire and Brandeis University in sociology and anthropology, with a minor in zoology. For someone who "settled for" a financially sustaining second career, Coleman's sociological accomplishments are impressive and stretch from university teaching to



directing service projects for Native American and rural youth to helping senior citizens. He has instructed police, held community workshops, and run group therapy sessions.

His first published article on his beloved cryptozoology appeared in 1969. That same year, he married. During the 1970s, Coleman was in the San Francisco area; more accurately, in nearby woods with cohorts he identified as “early Bigfooters”. Two divorces and two moves later, he arrived in Maine. During all this time, he continued investigations into lake monsters, North American apes (or Napes), weird humanoids, and a wide array of mystery animals.

Coleman pursued his passion with side-trips into the fringes of the strange and sociopathological. His acclaimed book *Suicide Clusters*, for example, featured a section of the self-inflicted deaths of baseball players and was cited by media outlets from *Sports Illustrated* to the BBC. And Coleman just kept on publishing. To date, he has written hundreds of articles and authored or contributed to what seems like almost as many books. A partial catalogue of subjects and titles includes: *Creatures of the Outer Edge*, *Curious Encounters*, *The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide*, *Mysterious America*, *Cryptozoology A to Z*, and the 20-volume series *Loren Coleman Presents*. His newest work, out this autumn, is *Beyond Bigfoot: The Transformation of Cryptozoology*.

Of course, with such publishing credentials, he’s the ‘go-to guy’ across all media platforms for scholarly information on all things mysterious and cryptozoological. If you’ve seen cryptid programmes on NBC’s *Unsolved Mysteries*, A&E’s *Ancient Mysteries*, the History Channel’s *Monster Quest*, the Travel Channel’s *Weird Travels*, or similarly-themed segments on CBS,



The museum welcomes 7,000 visitors every year

ITV, CNN or Fox, then you’ve seen Loren Coleman at work. In addition to his appearances in documentary feature films (i.e. *Cryptotrip*, *Search for Mothman* and a half-dozen others), Coleman portrayed a cryptozoologist in the 2008 fictional movie *Monster in the Woods*. (“The acting role was not a stretch for me as a performer, as I didn’t play the lead,” he says). On a

TOP: The entry room of the International Museum of Cryptozoology.

ABOVE: A “life-size” figure of Bigfoot is a star attraction at the ICM.

more serious note, Coleman has been teaching about his passion at university level since the 1980s, and gave one of the first courses in cryptozoology credited in the United States at the University of Southern Maine.

In 2003, after some five plus decades of research, travels (which included a lot of intense and uncomfortably rough living), learning, speaking and collecting, Coleman founded the International Cryptozoology Museum (ICM) in his house in Portland, Maine, as “a legacy to celebrate researchers and scientists in many different categories.” In 2009, the museum moved to downtown Portland, and it relocated to its present site in 2011. Now it too is a source of personal surprise, as Coleman says that his biggest moments of discovery revolve around meeting and working with similarly enthused individuals and watching “the field [of cryptozoology] grow from five people in the USA (Ivan T Sanderson’s 1965 estimate) to thousands.” When asked exactly how many active researchers there are, however, he says that the exact number of cryptozoologists worldwide “is impossible to know”.

Today, the ICM welcomes some 7,000 visitors every year, many drawn by what the museum’s creator calls “the celebrity cryptids... the Loch Ness Monster and sea serpents and, much to my delight, the Yeti and Bigfoot.” He laughingly acknowledges that the two-and-a-half metre (approximately 8ft) tall replica is based more on the fictional *Harry and the Hendersons* film star than anything else. Hardly a visitor comes in who doesn’t pose with the celebrity attraction. Coleman smiles as he talks about an unexpected segment of the museum’s attendees. “A lot of police and military are captivated by casts of hairy hominid footprints. Many arrive as sceptics – if not openly scoffing – but leave open to the question after viewing archival photos, film footage



and a sample of hair from a Yeti.”

Museum rooms flow one into the other and are filled with models, photos, videos, expedition souvenirs and enough information to fire the imagination of even the most casual observer. Because ICM houses such a dense collection, a small, but knowledgeable and dedicated, staff is charged with its maintenance. Jeff Meuse, Assistant Director, whose personal cryptozoological infatuation is with sea serpents, is in charge of social marketing, education and instructional print material, as well as the cosy and curious gift shop. A college student, Meuse is pursuing a degree in science education. Jenny Coleman, Loren’s wife (appropriately enough, they were wed on Hallowe’en 2013), has also had a lifelong interest in all things cryptozoological and mysterious. She manages the *ICM Journal* and recently published articles on Slenderman and Black-Eyed Kids in these very pages (FT317:30-34, 323:29-30). “Jenny is more interested in fantasy creatures,” explains Loren, “that are more emotional, feminine, mythological.”

Although Coleman maintains prodigious production of written cryptozoological material, one of his goals with the museum is “not to write so much” and to continue offering museum attendees surprises, such as a special upcoming exhibition of the Minnesota Ice Man.

He avers that the line between science and a good story is sometimes a blurry one. Wanting to know what the best current contenders are, I ran down a list of some “top cryptids”, and asked him to weigh in on the possibilities that they are fact rather than fancy.

A living Mammoth?

“There’s a 10 per cent chance.”

Existent dinosaurs?

“More likely.”

Lake monsters? ³

“Read my book.”

Finding a thylacine?

“95 per cent yes.”

Chupacabra?

“Mixed. The two-legged ones,



first reported in Puerto Rico, have possibilities”. But the four-legged, as seen and photographed in the southern US and northern Mexico, are “animals suffering mangle.”

Reptilian/human hybrids?

“Lizardmen are intriguing but, mostly, this is more of a political nature.”

And Bigfoot?

“Ninety nine per cent yes! Something will be found. It’s unlikely to be in the Americas or Europe, but there’s still hope in the Himalayas”.

Exhibits at the ICM clearly show that what was once deemed fiction later proved to be very much zoological fact. The Mountain Gorilla was thought to be apocryphal until its existence was confirmed in 1902. The Giant Panda was not believed to exist until 1935.

TOP: A fine example of the taxidermic composite known as a ‘Fiji Mermaid’.

ABOVE: A 22ft [7m] wide, 14ft [4m] long “pterodactyl” made by Haxan SFX for the *Freakylinks* Fox TV series. The model was also used in a hoax ‘Thunderbird’ photograph.

The Komodo Dragon was taken off the cryptid list in 1912, the Giant Mountain Ram in 2008, and the Coelacanth (featured in the ICM logo) stunned the scientific world, when it was rediscovered in 1938. Much to the incredulity of the general public, quite large animals are still being discovered and added to the scientific roster of global fauna.

Coleman brightens like an inspired child when discussing his favourite of the cryptids – that big-footed mystery animal. And it’s that just-below-the-surface sense of wonder in all of us that he seeks to engage. “I want to keep the youthful, passionate part of life alive!” he says. “Cryptozoology is a ‘gateway field,’ where one is exposed to both animals and mystery.” And that combination leads many, as it led him many years ago, to related sciences and, perhaps, new discoveries that will astound us all. His message to the next generation is: “Anything is possible. You only find things if you look for them”. **FT**

NOTES

1 *Bon Appetite* magazine, 2009.

2 Coleman will be hosting an International Cryptozoological Conference in St Augustine, Florida, in January 2016. Details at www.gofundme.com/ICM-Africa.

3 In 1999, Coleman was set to join explorer Dan Scott Taylor on a submarine expedition of Loch Ness. At the last minute, it was cancelled by the authorities, which didn’t want ‘Nessie’ harmed. Coleman was relieved, as he found out that the submarine leaked.



PAUL ROSS travels the world documenting the historic, unusual and just plain weird in words and images. He’s based in Santa Fe, surrounded by the ghosts of the old West, and can be found online at www.globaladventure.us

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

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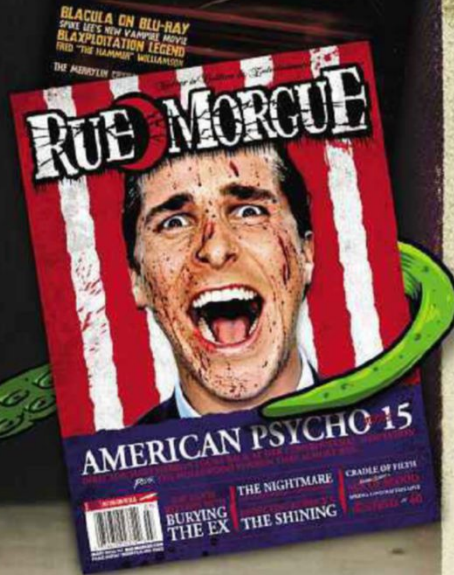
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JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

40. THE STRANGE CASE OF THE COUNTESS OF DERWENTWATER

In 1715, James Radcliffe, the third Earl of Derwentwater, was executed for his participation in the Jacobite rebellion. The Hanoverian government cast covetous eyes on the rebel Earl's vast estates in south-west Northumberland, but Lord Derwentwater had settled them on his infant son John, and the legality of this move was upheld in 1719. The martyred Earl's family had wisely made themselves scarce, bringing young John with them to the Netherlands, where Jacobites were much safer than in England. But in 1731, there must have been a great shout of 'Hup! Hup! Huzza!' in the London government buildings, when it was announced that John Radcliffe had died a minor. The Derwentwater estates were entrusted to (some would say usurped by) Greenwich Hospital, and in 1865 it was announced that they had been transferred to the Commissioners of the Admiralty.

But in August 1866, the newspapers in Northumberland could report an extraordinary development: Countess Amelia Matilda, the rightful heirress to the Derwentwater estates, had taken up residence in Blydon-on-Tyne. She explained that young John Radcliffe had staged an accident and

faked his death in 1731, in order to escape the Hanoverian agents plotting to murder him. He had married well and lived for many years. His second son James had married a Princess Sobiesky, and Countess Amelia was his only living child. The Countess had some private means, she alleged, and she also had custody of a considerable stockpile of furniture, paintings and other valuable objects belonging to her distinguished family. A distinguished-looking, middle-aged lady who sometimes liked to dress in military uniform, the Countess became quite popular locally. She gave generously to charity, insinuated herself with various dignitaries, and promised the needy that after she had taken over the Derwentwater estates, poverty would become a distant memory, and the paupers would dine from her table in style.

The Northumberland authorities kept the rabble-rousing noblewoman under observation, but since she seemed entirely sane and respectable, they did not fear that she would stage an uprising or rebellion. But they were proven wrong when Countess Amelia went to war on 29 September 1868. Dressed in an Austrian uniform, complete with sword, she led two of her stoutest followers, and cart containing her belongings, to her ancestral home, ruined Dilston Castle.

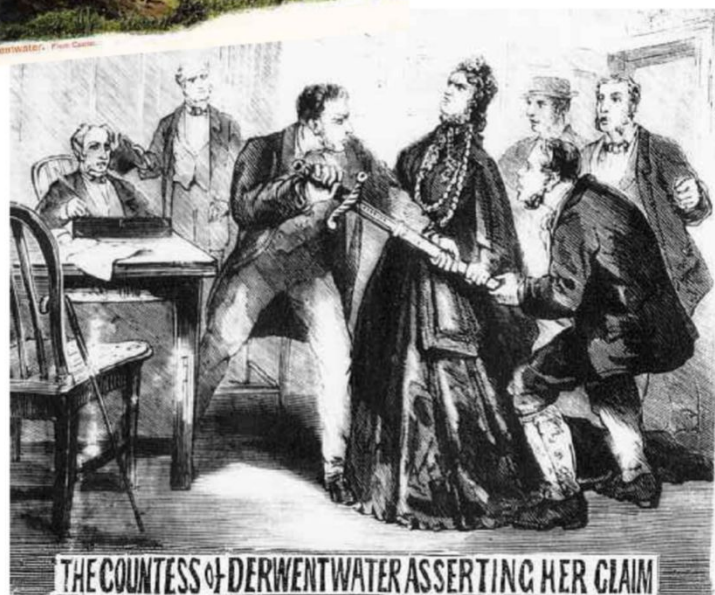
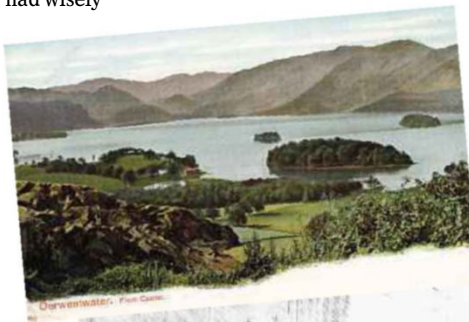
Since the castle was uninhabited, she could raise a canopy in one of the roofless rooms, and fill it with her possessions. When her occupation of the castle became known, Amelia's followers brought her food and other supplies, to be rewarded with generous promises of future prosperity, once the Derwentwater lands had been restored to their rightful owner. These credulous supporters believed her every word, and imagined feudal pleasures to come once she had established her rights. One of Amelia's adherents praised her in a poem:

*Oh, could the human hand obtain
Then all it could bestow,
Again would Countess Amelia reign
Where her sires did long ago.
Then justice, mercy and gratitude,
Go hand in hand,
And give to the heart its latitude
And Countess Amelia her land.*

But the agent of the Admiralty Commissioners, a certain Charles Grey, was not amused by this impromptu uprising. He raided the castle with a troop of sturdy men, put Amelia's followers to flight, and removed her furniture. When the gallant noblewoman drew her sword in a threatening manner, they disarmed her, put her in a chair, and unceremoniously carried her out of the castle grounds.

The chagrined Countess erected her tent just outside the castle, over a flooded ditch, but in spite of these insalubrious living

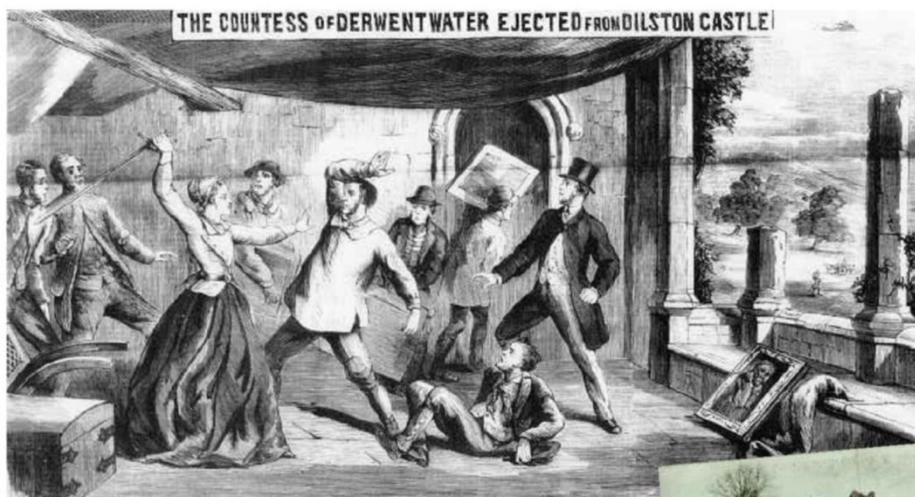
conditions, she still upheld her claim. Some of her followers warned her about the damp, but since Countess Amelia was determined to stay where she was, they built her a small hut instead. The proprietor of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, Mr Joseph Cowen Jr., known as 'The Blaydon Brick', openly supported her claim, and some other newspapers also found it cruel that a middle-aged woman was forcibly evicted from what she claimed to be the castle of her forebears. One of Amelia's supporters composed an amusing poem in the local dialect:



ABOVE LEFT: Derwentwater, from an old postcard. LEFT: The Countess keeps Grey and his henchmen at bay with her sword, from the *IPN*, 10 October 1868.

ILLUSTRATED NEWS

WEEKLY RECORD



LEFT: The Countess again confronts Grey and his men, from the *IPN*, 27 November 1869. BELOW: Dilston Castle, from a postcard stamped and posted in 1907.

*Then the Blaydin Bricks torn'doot, and Cowins' mang the swarm
This swore be Trooth an' Honor's cause She shuddint suffer harm,
Oh maw canny, bonny lass, but aw like ye for yor neym;
For nowt but morder teuk the heed frey Dorrintwettor – sheym!
Oh! bliss the Coontis is she eeves in the funny leukin' tent,
She'll get hor reets sum time, aw hope, an' bliss the boonty sent
For she's the reetful hair aw naw, an' bellangs the greet istates,
An'ef she gets them bless her soul! there'll soon be open gates,
Egh, the hungory she'll feed fat, an' the jeebil she'll meyk strang,
An'a' the orfin bairms nearby'll raise a jolly sang,
Singin' 'Life an' Happiness tiv ivory soul on Tyne
An' glory to Armeeley's cause – for Justis is divine!*

But the Hexham Highway Board declared the hut of the Countess an obstruction, fined her 10 shillings, and dismantled it. In a book entitled *Jottings of Original Matter from the Diary of Amelia Countess of Derwentwater*, sold and published by Joseph Cowen, the noblewoman was most indignant about this state of affairs. Parts of this book are in French and Latin, severely testing the linguistic abilities of Amelia's Northumberland followers. It was illustrated with various amateur drawings, some of them executed by Countess Amelia's own hand, and with a surprisingly youthful-looking

photograph said to depict this illustrious lady. Protected by her small band of followers, Countess Amelia lay low for a year. But on 19 November 1869,

she marched to Charles Grey's office at the head of her supporters, and told him that he had no right to demand rent from her tenants. An angry scuffle broke out, and the sword of the Countess was broken in two. She claimed that Grey had seized hold of her and ordered two of his henchmen to throw her downstairs; he denied this, and instead claimed that the angry noblewoman had rapped him over the knuckles with her stick. The next move was that Henry Brown, a former bailiff who had become Amelia's leading supporter, led a mob of her followers to a farm on the Derwentwater estates, and rustled 22 sheep, 11 cows and two horses. All these animals were sold by auction, along with various tools and implements stolen from the farm, to help boost Countess Amelia's fighting funds. But the police arrested Brown and 10 of Amelia's other supporters, and the cattle-rustler was rewarded with nine months imprisonment with hard labour.

The imprisonment of Henry Brown was a major blow to the Countess, who had actually borrowed money to support her claim. Her creditors clamoured for the return of their funds, and forced her to sell her heirlooms at auctions. But although Amelia had claimed that these treasures, some famous old master paintings among them,



were worth at least £200,000, the auction buyers did not agree, casting doubt on the authenticity of the grubby old paintings. A 1520 painting by Albrecht Dürer went for £2 15s., two splendid battle scenes by Rubens fetched £2 10s. together, and 'St. Jerome in the Desert' by Leonardo da Vinci fetched 7s 6d. This dismal auction finally broke the spirit of the haughty Countess, and she was imprisoned in Newcastle Gaol as a bankrupt.

Once released, she broke with Brown and many of her other supporters, and died destitute in 1880, still maintaining her claim.

Who was this remarkable claimant, Countess Amelia of Derwentwater? Well, competent historians have asserted that John Radcliffe really died

without issue in 1731, making it unlikely that this Northumberland woman of mystery was a legitimate descendant of his. Nor is there any record of a Princess Sobiesky marrying a man named Radcliffe, or for that matter any mystery Englishman. Countess Amelia did possess some genuine pieces of furniture belonging to the Radcliffes, as well as some bona fide documents, and it is of course possible that she was the descendant of some person connected with the Radcliffes, perhaps by an unsanctified liaison. Mr Cadwallader J Bates, author of the *History of Northumberland*, proposed that Amelia was a lady's maid from Dover who had moved to Germany, where she came across an old novel in which the son of Lord Derwentwater settled in that country after a mock funeral. This version would have been easier to believe if Bates had provided the title of this novel, and the name of its author. Nor did he explain how a Dover lady's maid could have learnt Latin, French and German, languages in which Amelia was proficient. The pseudo-noblewoman's knowledge of history was excellent, and her grasp of the annals of the Derwentwater peers well-nigh encyclopedic. In the annals of claimants of great estates, she stands between John Nichols Thom the Kentish fanatic, whose swordplay antics she emulated, and that man of mystery, the Tichborne Claimant.

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Why Fortean?



Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, FT is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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PHENOMENOMIX DION FORTUNE 3 HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

DION FORTUNE'S MEETING WITH MR. MORIARTY WAS TIMELY! HE WAS EVEN BETTER THAN SHE AT WARDING OFF OCCULT ATTACKS! HIS FIRST ACT WAS TO SEE OFF A GLOWING VAMPIRE!



SHE BELIEVED THE UK WAS INFESTED WITH VAMPIRES - DEAD SOLDIERS WHO HAD BEEN "TURNED" BY GERMAN NOSFERATU AND SENT BACK TO KILL IN BLIGHTY...



BUT SHE WAS ALSO FRIGHTENED BY HER OWN POWERS... FOR HER OWN DEFENCE, SHE IMAGINED THE SPIRIT FORM OF A HUGE WOLF!



BUT IT WORKED TOO WELL! HER WORK COLLEAGUES WERE SEEING WOLVES EVERYWHERE!



AND THEN A GIANT, ALL TOO SOLID WOLF - THE "FENRIS WOLF" OF NORSE MYTHOLOGY - MANIFESTED IN HER ROOM! ALARMING, EH?



WITH A SUPERHUMAN EFFORT, SHE DRAGGED THE WOLF BACK INTO HER SOLAR PLEXUS, VIA A KIND OF MAGIC UMBILICAL CORD...



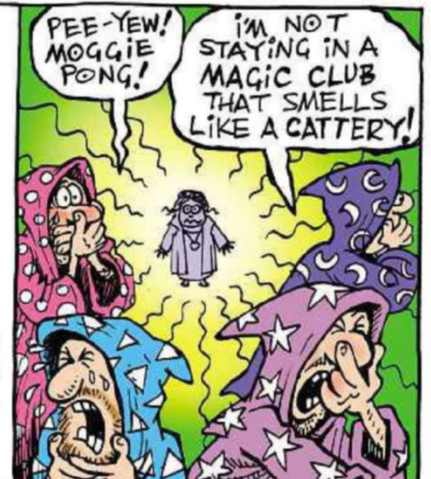
BUT THE JOINT WAS STILL JUMPING WITH ENTITIES! SHE WAS REPEATEDLY HARASSED BY THE SPIRIT OF "MISS L", A LOCAL LESBIAN WHO HAD A CRUSH ON HER... MISS L'S HEAD, REDUCED TO THE SIZE OF AN ORANGE, FLOATED THROUGH THE AIR AND SNAPPED ITS TEETH AT DION!



AFTER THE GREAT WAR SHE MOVED TO LONDON AND JOINED THE ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN...



SHE STAYED WITH THE GOLDEN DAWN FOR 10 YEARS, AND SET UP HER OWN RITUAL MAGIC GROUP WHILE STILL A MEMBER... BY NOW, SHE HAD A GROWING NUMBER OF UNSEEN ENEMIES, ONE OF WHOM SLAPPED A "CAT CURSE" ON HER... FIRST THERE WAS A FELINE STENCH EVERYWHERE...



THEN SHE SAW A GIANT CAT, "THE SIZE OF A TIGER!"



THE DOORS AND WINDOWS OF HER HOUSE WERE BESIEGED BY HUNDREDS OF MOGGIES!!



SHE RETALIATED WITH A POWERFUL EXORCISM! ALL THE CATS VANISHED!



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ON SALE 23 JULY 2015

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



Andrew Chimboza, 35, ripped out the heart of Mbuyiselo Manoma, 62, and ate it "to prove I wasn't a moffie [gay]", he told a court in Cape Town, South Africa. Chimboza admitted murdering Manoma in June 2014. Police found him chewing flesh and Manoma had a gaping hole in his chest. The court heard Chimboza flew into a rage after Manoma insulted him while checking his window tinting work. "I do not know why I ate it and I accept my actions were wrong and exceeded the boundaries of self-defence," said Chimboza. He was jailed for 18 years in April. *MX News (Sydney)*, 6 Feb + 30 April 2015.

An unnamed 27-year-old woman appeared in court in Nigeria charged with the murder of her five-month-old baby. In her defence, she claimed that her daughter repeatedly turned into a python and tried to swallow her alive, so she threw her into a pit lavatory, where the unfortunate infant died. Later the woman confessed that she had heard voices telling her "to take the baby back to the waters she had come from". The woman was referred to a mental institution for examination. *Information NG*, 31 Dec 2014.

A farmer in Romania was eaten alive after he fell over in a pig pen and couldn't get up. Relatives of Alexandru Pop, 46, went looking for him in the village of Aschileu Mare after he had gone to feed the animals but hadn't returned. They discovered his body with half his face eaten off. Nephew Andrei Lexandru said they thought he might have had a heart attack, but an autopsy revealed he probably just slipped. The pigs were put down. *Metro*, 1 April 2015.

A basketball player died after inhaling chewing gum into her lungs while asleep. Shanice Clark, 21, from Toronto, was found dead in her dormitory at California University in Pennsylvania. *Times*, 22 Jan 2015.

Samantha Jenkins, 19, from Llanelli, South Wales, who died in her mother's arms on 3 June 2011 after suffering a fit, may have been killed by chewing gum, an inquest in Swansea heard on 5 May 2015. She munched on up to 14 sticks of sugar-free gum a day and did not always spit it out – several large lumps were found in her stomach. She died because levels of minerals in her body fell fatally low and pathologist Dr Paul Griffiths said the gum might have prevented them from being absorbed. *Metro*, 6 May 2015.

A woman found her husband beaten to death with a claw hammer by a paranoid schizophrenic, 43 years after her sister was murdered by an escape psychiatric patient. Enid Hatch, 70, had just celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary with Fred, 76. She was 26 when her sister Betty Elston, 25, was killed in a random attack on a beach in Sully, South Wales, by a psychiatric patient on the run in 1971.

Last October, Alan Rogers, 73, battered Mr Hatch to death as he returned from spreading

seeds on the communal garden at their sheltered housing complex in Dinas Powys, near Cardiff in South Wales. Rogers was an undiagnosed paranoid schizophrenic who admitted planning the killing because he believed that Mr Hatch, a Royal Navy veteran, was using witchcraft to harm and kill cats. *D.Telegraph*, 17 April 2015.

Stephen Woytack, 74, of Scranton, Pennsylvania, and his wife were decorating his mother-in-law's gravesite at St Joseph's Cemetery in Throop – as they did every Easter – when the 180kg (400lb) tombstone toppled over and killed him as he knelt in prayer. He was laid to rest right in front of the stone that killed him. *[R] Wnep.com (news station)*, 30 Mar 2015.

A British man teaching in Japan may have died from inhalation of hydrogen sulphide, used to treat his bonsai plants. The body of Adil Ahmed, 30, from Aspley, Nottinghamshire, was found in October 2013 at his flat near Tokyo. An inquest heard Japanese authorities think the gas, made by mixing household ingredients, may have been to blame. It has been used in suicides. The Nottingham coroner recorded an open verdict. *Sunday People*, 3 May 2015.

A human cannonball died when a faulty catch released the safety net as he flew into the air in front of hundreds of spectators at the Kent County Showground in Detling in April 2011. Matthew Cranch, 24, was a "thrill-seeker" from Cornwall who had become a stuntman only a week earlier. He plunged 40ft (12m) to the ground, suffered multiple injuries, and died in hospital. As he left the gun barrel, the large rope net immediately fell flat on the ground. The recoil from the firing set off sufficient vibration to shake the net loose. The quick-release safety catch for the net was liable to appear locked while in fact being dangerously loose. An inquest was held earlier this year. *D.Mail*, *D.Telegraph*, *Metro*, 20 Jan 2015.

When a woman in the village of Xinxiang, in China's Henan province, dropped her new mobile phone – worth 2,000 yuan (£190) – into a cesspit, her husband jumped in to try and retrieve it, but was overcome by fumes and passed out. The man's mother then went down but also fainted, prompting the woman and her father-in-law to descend in turn. Two neighbours then entered the open-pit lavatory and also became ill. Villagers used ropes to retrieve the six people from the tank, which was accessed via a brick-built hole one metre square. Four survived, but the husband and his mother died in hospital. *[AFP]* 31 May 2014.

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Writing – A Job with All Sorts of Opportunities for All Kinds of People

by Phil Busby

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For the last 26 years The Writers Bureau has been helping new writers get started in the business. Writers like Louise Kennedy, who struck gold when she started blogging about her life on a boat from the viewpoint of ... her cat. Baily

“My tutor was lovely, encouraging and offered me great constructive criticism.”

Boat Cat was picked up by a major publisher and turned into a book which now sells world wide. “The Writers Bureau has given me the confidence to follow my dreams,” Louise says. “My tutor was lovely, encouraging and offered me great constructive criticism.”

Another WB student, Martin Read, wanted to keep active in his retirement and his writing led to a great little bonus. “As a result of my cricket articles, I have been elected into The Cricket Writers Club – an organisation that counts experienced journalists among its members. One of the perks of this membership is a press card that gives me entry into all of England’s cricket stadium press boxes.” And there are not many that get in there.

Then there’s Jacqueline Jaynes, who just loves to travel: “The Writers Bureau course has done everything I hoped it would and more. There was a clear progression through chapters so that my writing skills and confidence grew steadily with feedback from



Louise Kennedy



Jacqueline Jaynes



Martin Read

my tutor. The market research activities were invaluable for opening up potential new avenues for publication.”

Those new avenues led to a travel website where Jacqueline started writing short articles. Soon she was asked to join the team, and now she and her husband get expenses paid trips all over the world in exchange for reviews!

These are just some of the many inspirational true stories from Writers Bureau students. And there’s no reason why you shouldn’t join them. Who knows, this time next year I could be writing about your success. With a 15-day trial and money back guarantee, there’s nothing to lose and potentially a whole new life to gain. So why not visit the website at www.writersbureau.com or call Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

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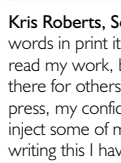
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Hannah Evans, Winchester “I’ve been published in The Guardian and Good Life earning £400. And now I’ve got my first book published by Bloomsbury called MOB Rule: Lessons Learned by a Mother of Boys. The Writers Bureau course provided me with structure, stopped my procrastination but most importantly it provided the impetus to try something different.”



Kris Roberts, Somerset “When I first saw my words in print it was life changing. Someone else had read my work, believed in it, paid for it, and put it out there for others to see. As more articles made it to press, my confidence grew and I found I wanted to inject some of myself into my writing. At the time of writing this I have received £1,197 for my work.”



Jane Isaac, Northamptonshire “When I started the Writers Bureau course, I wanted to explore avenues for my writing and develop and strengthen my personal style. I had no idea that it would lead to me being a published writer of novels and short stories. I still pinch myself when I receive emails and messages from readers who’ve enjoyed my work or when I give talks to book clubs and visit bookstores to do signings. These are magical moments that have changed my life – my dream has come true.”

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